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1853.

249. C. 586.

A rescue, a rescue. Good folks bring
a rescue or two.

[illegible]

Thus "*mutato nomine* * * *fabula narratur*," our Tale appears under a different title; THE COLVILLE FAMILY, who were to have been studiously concealed beneath The Cloud, have now boldly emerged from its obscuring shadow, and invite the public to regard them and their fortunes with as favourable an eye as its conscience, (the public conscience is a quality we have often heard of, but of which we have never seen a clear definition; perhaps the *Edinburgh Review* will obligingly supply this desideratum) will permit. And we hereby make over to the Authoress of a "Trap to catch a Sunbeam" all interest in clouds, mists, fogs, vapours, Wills-o'-the-Wisp, rainbows, halos, and other meteorological phenomena available for the purposes of metaphorical nomenclature; and if she be not obliged to us for this our resignation in her favour, together with the fine long words in which we have expressed the same, gratitude must assuredly have departed from the bosoms of the daughters of men.

London, December, 1852.

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THE FORTUNES

OF

THE COLVILLE FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO PICTURES.

A MERRY Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Words of course, in themselves good and well-chosen, and embodying a wish which all who love their neighbour, should feel and communicate;—God in his mercy grant there may be very many who can respond to such a salutation hopefully; for in this Valley of the Shadow of Death, there must be some who shrink from it as from a bitter mockery. Of such are those who, loving deeply, have lost, or fear to lose, the object of their fond idolatry; of such are those to whom, gifted, perhaps, with an even wider capacity of affection, such a fear would seem a blessing, for

then they would not have toiled through a lifetime, lonely-hearted. A Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! God comfort those who shudder at such kindly greeting!

One short month since, a little space of time, but more than long enough for the performance of many a deeper tragedy than that to which we are about to refer, an artist, glancing into the sunny breakfast-parlour of Ashburn Rectory, might have made a pretty picture of the group on which his eye would have fallen.

That *gentleman* (in rags he would equally have looked such) with the calm, high forehead, mild eye, and earnest, thoughtful mouth, must be the father of the family; for his dark hair shows many a silver thread, and the lines that appear upon his still smooth brow, can scarcely be the result of mental occupation only; but, if we are right in our conjecture, whence did that curly-pated nine-year-old urchin, seated upon his knee, contrive to get his arch, merry face? for he can scarcely have "come alive" out of one of Murillo's paintings, to give light and life to our family sketch. Oh! we see, it is his mother's countenance the rogue has appropriated, only the mischief in it is all his own;

for the expression of her still beautiful features is chastened and pensive, as of one who has lived and loved, and done angels' work on earth, until the pure soul within has stamped its impress on the outward form.

But if you want something pretty—nay, we may as well tell the whole truth, and say at once bewitching—to look at, cast your eyes (you won't be in a hurry to remove them again) upon the figure seated at Mama's right hand, and recognizing her fac-simile (with twenty summers taken off her age, and barely eighteen left), declare whether that is not "nice," rather. The expression is not the same, we confess: more of the woman and less of the angel, you will say. We admit it; but then, how could that little rosebud of a mouth look anything but petulant? those violet eyes express . . well, it's difficult to tell what they don't express that is good, and fresh, and piquant, and gay, and—must we add?—a very little bit coquettish also;—why, the very dimple on her chin—such a well-modelled chin—has something pert and saucy about it. There! you've seen enough of the little beauty: you'll be falling in love with her directly!

No one could mistake the relationship existing between the gentleman we have already described, and that tall, graceful boy, with his pale, finely-chiselled features, and classically-shaped head. Even the earnest, thoughtful expression is common both to father and son, save that the curl of the short upper lip, which tells of pride in the boy, has, in the man, acquired a character of chastened dignity.

Reader, do you like our picture? Let us turn to another, less pleasing, but alas! equally true.

The waves of time roll on, and, like a dream, another month has lapsed into the sea of ages.

The sun is shining still; but it shines upon an open grave, with aching hearts around it. A good man has died, and his brave, loving spirit has gone whither his faith preceded him, and his good works alone can follow him. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

Let us reserve our sympathy for those who live to mourn them.

When the curate of Ashburn preached a funeral sermon, recalling to the minds of those who had practically benefited by them, the virtues of their late rector, holly garlands hung in the fine old

church, to commemorate the birth-time of One who came to bring "peace on earth, and good will towards men;" but none dared to wish the widow and orphans a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, lest the wish might seem an insult to their sorrow.

CHAPTER II.

THE BROTHERS.

"PERCY, I *have* been quiet *so* long, and you say I must not stand upon my head, because it disturbs Mama; do come out and let us ride the pony by turns," implored little Hugh Colville, in a strenuous whisper; which was, however, clearly audible throughout the small breakfast-parlour, which was the scene of our family picture.

Percy Colville, the shy, handsome boy of our sketch, looked up with a pensive smile from the writing on which he was engaged, and shook his head negatively, in token that he felt obliged to refuse the request of his younger brother, in whom the reader will recognize, with little difficulty, a certain Murillo-like urchin to whom he has been already introduced. But the petition of her youngest born had reached the ears of the

widow, who (if she had a virtue which had outgrown its due proportions till cavillers might deem it a fault) was, perhaps, a little over indulgent to Master Hugh.

"My dear Percy, you have been writing for me long enough," she said: "you will be ill if you shut yourself up too much; besides, Hugh has been so good that he deserves his ride, and you know I don't like to trust him by himself."

Percy hesitated: the writing on which he was engaged was the copy of a surveyor's report concerning that *vexata questio*, dilapidations. Some difference of opinion had arisen on the subject between the agent of the patron of the living and Mrs. Colville's solicitor, and a copy of the report was to be forwarded by the next post to Mr. Wakefield, Mrs. Colville's legal adviser. The matter was of importance, involving a considerable sum of money. Percy was aware of these facts: he knew, also, that he could only just finish his task by the time the village post went out; and he was about to declare that Hugh must give up his ride for that day, when his mother, reading his thoughts, stooped over him, and, kissing his pale brow, whispered—

"Do not refuse him, dear Percy: remember, he will not have many more rides ——"

She paused, for her composure was failing, then finished in a trembling voice.

"You know the pony must be sold when we go away."

As she spoke, an expedient suggested itself to Percy's mind, and pressing his mother's hand affectionately, he closed his writing-desk, and, carrying it off under his arm, exclaimed:—

"Come along, Hugh! we'll take old Lion (he wants a run, poor dog) as well as the pony, and have a glorious scamper."

And a glorious scamper they had, only Hugh rode the whole way, and Percy ran by his side, declaring that he greatly preferred it, which was decidedly a pious fiction, if a fiction can ever be pious.

"Oh! Mama, Mama! do make breakfast—come, quick! there's a good Mama! for I'm as hungry as—as—several sharks," exclaimed Hugh, rushing like a small express train into the breakfast-parlour, on the following morning.

"Oh, you naughty mad-cap, you've shaken the table, and made me blot 'That Smile' all over!"

cried his sister Emily, in vain endeavouring to repair the misfortune which had accrued to the "popular melody" she was copying.

We suppose it is scarcely necessary to reintroduce you to Emily, dear reader. You have not so soon forgotten the rosebud of a mouth, or the dangerous dimple—trust you for that.

"Well, I declare, so I have," rejoined the culprit, a little shocked and a good deal amused at the mischief he had occasioned; then striking into the tune of the outraged ditty, he sang in an impish soprano, and with grimaces wonderful to behold—

> "That smile—when once—de-par-ar-ar-arted
> Must leave—me bro—ken har-ar-ar-arted.

Oh! Emily, what a mess we have made of 'broken-hearted,' to be sure; I'm so sorry, but what fun!"

And then came a burst of ringing, happy, childish laughter, which, of course, sealed his forgiveness: no one could think him to blame after *that*.

"I wonder where Percy is; I scarcely ever knew him late before," observed Mrs. Colville, when quiet had been restored.

"Sarah tells me he is out riding," returned Emily, applying herself with very unnecessary energy to cut bread and butter.

As she spoke, the clatter of horse's feet became audible, and, in another moment, Percy cantered past the window.

"Where can the boy have been?" ejaculated Emily, holding the loaf lovingly, as though she were afraid of hurting the poor thing.

"*I* know, *I* do!" observed Hugh, from under the table, whence, having in his mind's eye metamorphosed himself into a wolf, he was preparing to spring out and devour Emily.

"*You* know, Hugh!" repeated Mrs. Colville in surprise; "come from under the table, then, and tell me."

"But, Mama, I'm a wolf, and just going to eat up Emily."

"Not now, dear," was the calm reply, as if a daughter more or less devoured by wild beasts, was of little moment to that un-anxious mother; "come here and tell me about Percy."

"Well, you know, Mama," began Hugh emerging from his hiding-place, and assuming the grave air of a *raconteur*, "when Percy came to

bed last night, he did not go to bed at all, that is not for a very, very, very long time. Do you know, I think"—and here he put on a solemn face and spoke with an air of mystery—" I think he was not in bed at twelve o'clock, perhaps not till almost one!" Having disclosed this frightful fact, he paused, and nodded like a bird, for the greater effect, ere he continued: " I went to sleep long before, but, whenever I opened my eyes, there he sat, still write, write, writing on, as if he was writing his life, like Robinson Crusoe—only," he added parenthetically—" only he's got no man Friday."

" But what could he be writing?" exclaimed Emily, coquetting with the large bread-knife.

" I know," resumed Hugh; then, having paused to balance himself on one leg, and spin round like a teetotum, he continued very fast, and without any stops, for Percy's footstep sounded in the hall: " he was writing the paper he had not time to finish yesterday, because I wanted him to go out with me and the pony; and this morning he got up at six o'clock to ride over to Staplehurst, seven miles there, and I don't know how many back again, to catch the post, and make it all the same

as if it had been put in yesterday; I know he did because Sarah says so." And, having delivered himself with the greatest vehemence of this somewhat incoherent account, he rushed up to his brother, then entering the room, and, throwing his arms round his waist, exclaimed, "Oh! Percy, I've gone and told them all about your great letter, and sitting up late, and everything, and never remembered till now that you said I wasn't to mention it to anybody. Oh! I am so sorry, but what fun!" and, assured by the expression of Percy's face that his crime was not quite unpardonable, Hugh's merry, childish laugh again rang through the apartment.

The mother's heart was full: tears stood in her eyes as, pressing her elder son to her bosom, she murmured, "Dear, dear Percy, you must not overtask your strength thus."

The post that morning brought the following letter directed to Mrs. Colville:—

"My Dear Sister,—That I have the will to aid you in your distress you cannot doubt; that the power to do so effectually, is denied me, adds one more to the troubles of life. My imprudent

marriage (he had run away with a pretty governess at eighteen), and its subsequent consequences (he had nine healthy children), force me to work like a horse in a mill in order to make both ends meet. Of this I am not complaining. I did an unwise thing, and must pay the necessary penalty. But I mention these facts to prove to you the truth of my assertion, that my power is not co-equal with my will. The little I can do is this: I am shareholder in an excellent proprietary school, where boys are taught everything necessary to fit them for a commercial life; Wilfred Jacob has been there two years, and is already conversant with, or, as he familiarly terms it, "well up in" tare and tret. I trust Adolphus Samuel, Albert John, Thomas Gabriel, and even the little Augustus Timothy, will soon follow, and profit equally. I therefore propose to send your two boys to this school at my own cost; and, if the eldest distinguishes himself, as I am proud to believe Wilfred Jacob will do, a desk in my counting-house (No. 8, Grubbinger-street, City) shall reward his diligence. Clementina Jane desires her kindest regards, and begs me to say that, should you finally determine upon settling in London, she shall have

much pleasure in looking out a cheap lodging for you in some of the least expensive streets in the vicinity of Smithfield. I am, dear Margaret, ever your affectionate brother,

"GOLDSMITH AND THRYFT.

"P.S.—So much for habit: I have become so accustomed to sign for the firm, that I actually forget that my name is Tobiah."

Mrs. Colville closed the letter, with a sigh, and placing it in her pocket, waited till the boys had breakfasted. As soon as they had quitted the room she handed it to her daughter, saying, "Read that, dear Emily: it is very kind of your uncle, but——"

"Percy at a desk in Grubbinger-street! Oh! my dearest Mama, what a dreadful idea!" exclaimed the Rosebud, arching her brows, and pursing up her pretty little mouth with an expression of the most intense disapproval: "Uncle Tobiah means to be very kind, but he forgets what Percy is."

Mrs. Colville shook her head mournfully. "I am afraid it is we who forget, love," she said: "Percy can no longer hope to pursue the career marked out for him—with the very limited means at my disposal, college is quite out of the question;

nay, if Sir Thomas Crawley persists in his demand for the incoming tenant's claim to these dilapidations, and should prove his right to it, I shall be unable to send the boys to school at all; indeed, I must not reject your uncle's offer rashly. I shall consult Mr. Slowkopf on the subject: he is a very prudent adviser."

"Oh! if you mean to ask *him*, the matter is as good as settled, and poor Percy chained to a desk for life," cried Emily. "Ah!" she continued, as a tall, thin, gaunt figure, clothed in rusty black, passed the window, "here he comes—the creature always puts me in mind of that naughty proverb about a certain person: one no sooner mentions him than there he is at one's elbow;—but, if you really want to talk sense to him, Mama dear, I'd better go, for I shall only say pert things and disturb you: he is so delightfully slow and matter-of-fact, that I never can resist the temptation of plaguing him;" and as she spoke, the Rosebud laughed a little silvery laugh at her own wickedness, and tripped, fairy-like, out of the apartment.

The worthy Mr. Slowkopf, who had held the office of curate of Ashburn for about two years, was a very good young man, and nothing else:

all his other qualities were negative. He wasn't even positively a fool, though he looked and acted the part admirably. He was essentially, and in every sense of the word, a slow man: in manners, ideas, and appearance, he was behind the age in which he lived; in conversation he was behind the subject discussed; if he laughed at a joke, which, solemnly and heavily, he sometimes condescended to do, it was invariably ten minutes after it had been made. He never heard of Puseyism till Tract Ninety had been suppressed, or knew of the persecutions and imprisonments of Dr. Achilli till that amateur martyr was giving tongue in Exeter Hall; he usually finished his fish when the cheese was being put on table; and went to bed as other people were getting up. Still, he had his good points. Unlike King Charles, of naughty memory—

> "Who never said a foolish thing,
> And never did a wise one,"

however dull and trite might be Mr. Slowkopf's remarks, his actions were invariably good and kind. The village gossips, when they were very hard-up for scandal, declared that, insensible as he appeared to all such frivolities as the fascinations of the

softer sex, he was gradually taking a "slow turn" towards the Rosebud of Ashburn. Nay, the rumour was reported to have reached the delicate ears of the "emphatic she" herself; who was said to have replied, that as she was quite certain he would never dream of telling his love till he heard she was engaged to be married to some one else—in which case, she should have a legitimate reason for refusing him—the information did not occasion her the slightest uneasiness.

However this might be, certain it is, that on the morning in question, Mr. Slowkopf, gaunt, ugly, and awkward, solemnly stalked into the breakfast-parlour, and that the widow, perplexed between her good sense and her loving tenderness for her children, laid before him her difficulties and her brother's letter.

The curate paused about three times as long as was necessary, and then, in a deep, sepulchral voice, observed—

"In order to attain to a sound and logical conclusion in regard to this weighty matter, it behoves me first to assure myself that I rightly comprehend the question propounded, and if, as I conceive, it prove to be one which will not admit

of demonstration with a mathematical certainty; then secondly, so to compare the different hypotheses which may present themselves, that, sufficient weight being allotted to each, a just and philosophical decision may be finally arrived at."

Having, after this preamble, stated the case in language as precise and carefully selected as though he were framing a bill to lay before Parliament, and were resolved to guard against the possibility of the most astute legal Jehu driving a coach and four through it, he argued the matter learnedly and steadily for a good half-hour, ere he dug out the ore of common sense from the mass of logical rubbish beneath which he had buried it, and decided in favour of Mr. Goldsmith's proposal. Pleased at his own cleverness in having solved this difficult problem, and possessing unlimited confidence in his oratorical powers, he volunteered to communicate the decision thus formed, to the person most nearly concerned therein, an offer to which Mrs. Colville, feeling her strength unequal to the task, reluctantly consented.

Percy listened in silence till Mr. Slowkopf had talked himself out of breath, which it took him some time to accomplish, for, in every sense of the

term, he was awfully long-winded;—when at length he was silent, the boy fixed his large eyes earnestly upon his face as he replied, "I understand, sir, we are so poor that it is not possible to send me to a public school, or to college as—as—my dear father wished to have done; but I do not see why I am necessarily obliged to become a merchant's clerk, a position which I shall never be fit for, and which I hate the idea of; the Colvilles have always been gentlemen."

"A man may work for his living in some honest occupation without forfeiting that title," returned Mr. Slowkopf sententiously.

"Not as a merchant's clerk," was the haughty reply: "No; let me be an artist, if I cannot receive a gentleman's education in England. I know I have some talent for drawing, let me study that, and then go to Italy, beautiful Italy, for a few years; people can live very cheaply abroad, and I will be very careful. When I become famous I shall grow rich, and be able to support Mama, and send Hugh to college, and then I shall care less for not having been there myself."

"Without attempting to regard your scheme

in its many complicated bearings, or to argue the matter in its entire completeness, for which time, unfortunately, is wanting," remarked Mr. Slowkopf deliberately; "I will place before you, *in limine*, certain objections to it which render the commercial career proposed by your excellent uncle, if not in every point a more advantageous arrangement, at all events one more suited to the present position of affairs. Your uncle proposes to take upon himself all immediate expense connected with your education; while, as a clerk in his counting-house, you will be in the receipt of a gradually increasing salary. Your scheme would demand a constant outlay of capital, for certainly the next five years; nay, it would be no matter of surprise to me if ten years should elapse, ere, by the precarious earnings of an artist's career, you were enabled to render yourself independent. In one case you will be an assistance to your excellent mother, in the other a burden upon her."

Percy walked to the window; the burning tears of disappointed ambition and mortified pride rushed to his eyes, but he brushed them hurriedly away, as he said in a firm, steady

voice, "Thank you for telling me the truth, Mr. Slowkopf; we will accept my uncle's offer."

Thus it came about that Percy and Hugh Colville were entered as boarders at Doctor Donkiestir's excellent proprietary commercial school.

CHAPTER III.

A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE.

THE Rosebud of Ashburn possessed a female friend. Caroline Selby was the daughter of Sir Thomas Crawley's agent. Sir Thomas Crawley was the rich man of the neighbourhood, lord of the manor, patron of the living, and owner of a splendid place about a mile from the village; but although Ashburn Priory was an old family-seat, the present owner of the property had by no means always been the great man he was at present; indeed, it may be doubted whether, in justice, he had any right to be so at all; though, unfortunately, in law he possessed a very sufficient one. The former possessor of Ashburn Priory, an irritable, perverse, old man, had, in a moment of passion, disinherited an only son (who had committed the unpardonable crime of consulting his heart, rather

than his pocket, in the choice of a wife), making a will in favour of a relative whom he had never seen, and of whom the little he had heard was unfavourable. It is true, he never intended this will to take effect; meaning, when he had sufficiently consulted his dignity, and marked his disapproval of the sin against Mammon which his son had committed, graciously to receive him into favour again; but Death, who has no more respect for ill-temper, than for many more amiable qualities, did not allow him time to repair the injustice he had committed, cutting him off with an attack of bronchitis, and his son with a shilling, at one fell stroke. The son, an amiable man, with a large family (a conjunction so often to be observed, that, to a speculative mind, it almost assumes the relation of cause and effect) soon spent his shilling, and, overtasking his strength to replace it, ere long followed his unjust father, though we can scarcely imagine that he travelled by the same road. Before this latter event took place, however, Mr. Thomas Crawley made his first appearance as lord of the manor of Ashburn, and master of the Priory; and everybody was so well aware what he was, that they carefully ab-

stained from inquiring what he had been. To those capable of judging, however, one thing was unmistakeably apparent; namely, that neither in the past nor in the present, could his manners and appearance entitle him to the designation of a gentleman. That he himself entertained an uncomfortable suspicion of this fact, might be gathered from the indefatigable perseverance with which he pursued the object of attaining to the rank of knighthood. Up the rounds of a ladder of gold he climbed into Parliament; once there, if he voted according to his conscience, that inward monitor must have been of a decidedly versatile temperament; for the way in which he wheeled about, and turned about, on every occasion, conceivable and inconceivable, was without precedent, save in the cases of Jim Crow, of giddy memory, and of Weathercock *versus* Boreas and Co. At last a crisis arrived; votes were worth more than the men who gave them: a minister stayed in who should have gone out; and Mr. Crawley became Sir Thomas. And this was the man, who, with a rent roll of 15,000*l.* a year, was about to avail himself of a legal quibble, in order to extort from a widow and orphans a share of the

little pittance that remained to them. His agent, Mr. Selby, was a better man than his master; and might have been better still, if "his poverty, and not his will," had not led him to consent to be the instrument wherewith Sir Thomas Crawley, M.P., transacted much dirty work in Ashburn and its vicinity. At the time we treat of, the will had so often yielded, that it had quite lost the habit of asserting itself; and the poverty, profiting by this inertness, had gradually disappeared, till Mr. Selby was generally looked upon as a man well to do in the world, and respected accordingly.

And this brings us back to the point from whence we originally started; namely, that the Rosebud of Ashburn possessed a female friend. Now, the office of female friend to a Rosebud, romantic and poetical as it sounds, was by no means a sinecure; indeed, from the confidante of Tilburina downward, these sympathizers of all work have had hard places of it. Still there appears to be no lack of amiable creatures ready to devote themselves to the cause of friendship; the supply seems always to equal the demand. Possibly occasional perquisites, in the shape of a heart

caught in the rebound, as in the case of a discarded lover, or the reversion of some *bon parti*, rejected for a more eligible offer, may have something to do with it—of this we cannot pretend to judge.

That any such sordid notions influenced Caroline Selby in her devotion to Emily Colville, we do not believe; on the contrary, the friendship arose from, and was cemented by, the Jack-Sprat-and-his-wife-like suitableness of their respective natures; Caroline having a decided call to look up to and worship somebody, while Emily experienced an equally strenuous necessity for being worshipped and looked up to. But the Rosebud was subject also to other necessities, which effectually preserved her friend from falling into the snares of idleness. First, she had a chronic necessity for "talking confidence,"—though how, in the quiet village of Ashburn, she contrived to obtain a supply of mysteries to furnish forth subjects for these strictly private colloquies, was the greatest mystery of all. Then privy councils were held upon dress, in all its branches, from staylaces up to *blonde Berthes*; and committees of ways and means had to combat and arrange financial difficulties. Again, the

affairs of their poorer neighbours required much talking about, and speculating upon; and their little charities (for, despite sundry small weaknesses and frivolities natural to their age, or rather, youth, and sex, the friends were thoroughly kind-hearted, amiable girls), could not be planned, or executed, without a *necessary* amount of conversation. Then there was a town, three miles off by the road, and two and a half by the fields, where everything came from; for, though Ashburn boasted a "general" shop, yet those who were rash enough to particularize any article they might require, beyond the inevitable bacon, cheese, soap, bad tea, worse sugar, starch, and hobnailed shoes, upon which agricultural life is supported, only prepared for themselves a disappointment.

This obliging town the Rosebud had a call to visit, on an average, three times a week at the very least; and of course, when the pony-chaise could not be had, which,—as Hugh, by the agency of that much enduring pony, existed rather as a centaur than a biped,—was almost always the case, Caroline Selby was required as a walking companion.

Having thus enlightened the reader as to the

nature of the friendship existing between these young ladies, together with other particulars, which, at the risk of being considered prosy, we felt bound to communicate to him, we resume the thread of our narrative.

Three weeks had elapsed since Mrs. Colville had accepted her brother's offer, and the day approached when Percy and Hugh were to quit the home of their happy childhood, never again to return to it. Mrs. Colville seldom alluded to the subject; busying herself in preparing their clothes, and in other necessary duties appertaining to the mistress of a family.

Now it happened that Master Hugh wore turn-over collars, famous for two peculiarities, viz.—the moment they were put on, clean and smooth, they became rumpled and dirty—and the strings, by which they were fastened, were the victims to a suicidal propensity for tearing themselves violently off, so that the amount of starch, labour, and tape, required to preserve these collars in an efficient condition, formed a serious item in the household expenditure.

Although the excellent factotum, Sarah, declared upon oath (not a *very* naughty one) that she had

reviewed the delinquents cautiously that day fortnight, and been able to report them fitted for service, yet, at the eleventh hour, when she was actually packing Hugh's box, there were only three strings and a quarter remaining among the twelve collars, and there was no reliance to be placed even upon them. Moreover, on examination, there was discovered to have been such a run upon tape of late, that not an inch of that useful article was forthcoming throughout the entire establishment. Under these appalling circumstances, Emily nobly volunteered to go to Flatville, and invest capital in the purchase of a "whole piece of tape." But the boys were absent on a skating expedition; and the roads were slippery, and the pony had not been roughed, and Emily, not liking to walk by herself, set off, no way loth, to enlist Caroline Selby as her companion.

Here, however, a difficulty arose. Mr. Selby was just starting in his phaeton, to drive over to the railroad station, two miles beyond Flatville, and his daughter was going with him, for the sake of a drive.

Caroline was perplexed: had it been only to

give up her own plans, she would gladly have done so; but between her father and her friend, a double sacrifice was required of her, and being only a single woman, she was unable to meet the demand. Mr. Selby, happily, hit upon an expedient. He proposed a compromise: Miss Colville should do him the honour to take a seat in his phaeton (he called it ph*ee-a*-ton), *he* would drive her as far as Flatville; his *daughter* should alight with her; they should make their *little* purchases (the words in italics he uttered in a tone of the enderest affection); and the phee-aton, in returning from the station, should call and pick them up.

Mr. Selby was a very polite man; and perpetually rubbed his hands together, as though he were playing at washing them, a habit possibly induced by a consciousness of all the dirty work he had performed. Emily patronised him, steadily disbelieving everything that was hinted against him, because he was Caroline's father,—a piece of cepticism, amiable, illogical, and womanly, which we rather admire in the young lady than otherwise.

Accordingly, favouring him with a bewitching smile, that a better man than he might have been

proud to win, she scarcely touched the hand he held out to assist her (which he carefully dry-washed afterwards, as though the contact even of her fairy fingers had dissolved the spell of its prudish purity), and sprang lightly into the "phee-aton."

Half an hour's drive brought them to Flatville, where Mr. Selby, so to speak, washed his hands of them, and went on to the railroad-station. Then began the shopping, that most mysterious and deeply-seated passion of the female heart—the one master-vice which serves the ladies of England instead of the turf, the wine-cup, and the gaming-table, which mislead their lords. There can be little doubt who first invented shopping! The same hand that launched that arrow into the bosom of private life, gave to the child-woman, Eve, the apple that betrayed her—an apple which contained the seeds of shopping. It is such a seductive, hypocritical sin, too, this same shopping — one which is so easily dressed up to resemble a virtue—that it is almost impossible to distinguish its true character, *till the bill comes in:* that, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, reveals the fiend in all its deformity. Every woman (that we have known)

is more or less addicted to this ruinous practice, but some appear especially gifted with the fatal talent, and, if the truth must be told, our little heroine was one of these unfortunates. The amount of shopping she would contrive to get, even out of a piece of tape, was fearful to reflect upon. In the first place, it was to be of a particular (*very* particular) texture, neither too coarse nor too fine; then society would probably be uprooted, and the Thames be set on fire, if it were a shade too wide, or, worse still, too narrow. Again tape was useless, without needles and thread wherewith to operate upon it; and for some time—indeed, till the obsequious parrot of a shopman had gone through his whole vocabulary of persuasion, and become cynical and monosyllabic—*all* the needles were too large; and, that difficulty being overcome, the thread (sewing-cotton Emily called it) took a perverse turn, and would by no means sympathize with the eyes of the selected needles, till the harassed shopman muttered a private aspiration in regard to those useful orifices, which would have cost him five shillings in any court of justice. But he took his revenge, did that cunning shopman, for, no sooner had Emily bought all that she required,

than he suddenly recovered his good humour and loquacity, and placed before her exactly the very articles she most desired, and had not funds to purchase withal, till Tantalus himself might have appeared a gentleman who lived at home at ease, by comparison with that sorely-tempted "Rosebud." Still, what woman could do, she did, for she firmly resisted everything, till an unlucky remnant of magpie-coloured ribbon, the "very thing she should want when she changed her mourning, and which she *knew* she should never meet with again," a ribbon so cheap that the shopman declared he was "giving it away" at the very moment when he was adding two shillings to the bill on the strength of it; though this seductive ribbon beguiled her, the little concession only proved that she was not above humanity. With which fact we are well contented, because, enjoying but a very distant and limited acquaintance with such higher circles as she would otherwise have mixed in, we might never have heard of her existence. That she possessed some power of self-denial she proved, by paying her bill and quitting the shop the moment that ribbon had conquered her; the next best thing to resisting temptation being to fly from it.

"Why, Caroline dear, we must have been an age in that shop, it's nearly five o'clock! what can have become of your father's carriage," exclaimed Emily, glancing in dismay at the hands of the old church clock, which pointed to a quarter to five.

"Really I can't conceive," was the reply: "something must have occurred to delay it, I suppose; it will be growing dusk before we can get home if we have to walk by the road, and we can scarcely attempt the fields so late by ourselves."

"Mama will be so frightened," suggested Emily, "if it gets at all dark before we return—had we not better start at once, and walk on till the carriage overtakes us?"

Caroline agreed to this plan, merely proposing the emendation that they should leave word they had done so, and that the groom, if he ever appeared, was to follow and endeavour to overtake them. For this purpose they re-entered the linen-draper's shop, where, while they paused for a moment to deliver the message, that vindictive shopman actually was scoundrel enough to display at arm's length a flimsy black scarf (*barège* we believe the villain called it) which, down to the very pattern itself (opaque spots of the same

material, representing apparently a turnip with a cocked hat on, though we can scarcely bring ourselves to believe the draughtsman could seriously have thus planned the design), Emily had dreamed of only the night before: such is the heartlessness of men—at least of shopmen.

The two girls, having nobly withstood the scarf, started energetically on their homeward walk, nor were their tongues less active than their feet, but then they had so much to talk about. The linen-draper's stock was first done ample justice to; that "dear" silver gray *mousseline de soie*, which wasn't dear at all, but as cheap as—(the ribbon perhaps, on which the shopkeeper only realized some fifty per cent., but then it was a remnant, and given away)—and then those gloves, French kid, oh! they must have been smuggled; how wrong it was to smuggle, at least Papa (Selby) always said so, but really the price was quite ridiculous; didn't Emily think so?"

Emily did not know about its being ridiculous, but it was dreadfully tempting, and if she had not made up her mind irrevocably against changing any one of the three sovereigns she had in her purse, and which must last her for pocket-money

for the next two months, she should decidedly have bought a pair, really, for the sake of economy.

This fruitful and edifying topic lasted them a good mile and a half, and was not yet exhausted, when Emily interrupted herself by exclaiming—"Upon my word it's growing quite dusk; I wonder whether that carriage is ever coming?"

"I'm sure I hope so, for I'm getting dreadfully frightened; ah! what's that?" replied her companion with a sudden start; "Oh! it's only a post, how silly I am; I declare I thought it was a man with a pistol hooked—no—what is it they call it when they're dangerous and mean to go off, Dear?"

"Cocked," returned Emily; "but surely that is a man, and a very uncomfortable looking one too; walk on quickly, and seem as if you did not perceive him; perhaps he may not take any notice of us."

The advice was sound, but, unfortunately, the plan did not prove as successful as it deserved to be; the individual in question, who, when they first came in sight, was lying apparently asleep upon some fallen timber by the road side, rose as they came near, and approaching them, began in a tone half-impertinent, half-imploring, to beg of them. He was a stout,

ruffianly-looking fellow, dressed in a style which accorded with his profession. The poor girls were considerably frightened: they were quite a mile from Ashburn, in a lonely part of the road; the evening was closing in rapidly, and there was no human being in sight, except their persecutor, who, walking beside them, grew every minute more pertinacious and imperative. With a most transparent attempt at dignified composure, Emily drew out her purse, and, taking a shilling from it, handed it to him, saying,—

"There, that is as much as we shall give you, so you need not follow us any farther—good-evening."

Taking the shilling, with a look of sulky dissatisfaction, the fellow paused for a moment in irresolution; but, unfortunately, when Emily produced her purse, his eye had caught the sparkle of gold, and his cupidity was too deeply excited to be so easily satisfied: looking up and down the road, to assure himself that no one was at hand to interfere with his designs, he again followed the trembling girls; and, coming up with them, exclaimed:—

"What! will you only give a poor fellow that's starving, a shilling? and you with a purse full of

money in your pocket—and you calls yourselves ladies too? It would only serve you right to show you that ladies was no better than other people."

As he spoke, he pressed rudely against Caroline Selby, who, shrinking from him, whispered in an agony of terror—

"Emily, what *will* become of us? Pray give him some more money, and entreat him to go away."

Thus urged, Emily again drew forth her purse, and, trembling at her own temerity, said in an authoritative tone of voice—

"There's half-a-crown for you, and now go away, and don't annoy us any more."

"Not without something better worth taking with me," was the insolent reply, as, catching her wrist, he attempted to force the purse from her grasp; but Emily, although greatly alarmed, had a brave little heart of her own, and held on stoutly, till the unmanly ruffian, provoked at her pertinacity, used so much force that she relinquished the purse; while at the same moment, partly through pain, partly through fright, she uttered a piercing scream.

Now, albeit insolent lords of the creation exulting in strong nerves, and not possessing soprano voices, are accustomed to regard screaming as a feeble-minded practice, equally useless and ridiculous, yet in the instance before us, it proved of the highest benefit, and by far the best thing, which, under the circumstances, Emily could have done; for, as if he were some good genius evoked by the Rosebud's appeal, suddenly and unexpectedly a tall, agile figure, sprang through a gap in the hedge, cleared the intervening space at a bound, and, almost before the footpad was aware of his approach, struck the scoundrel, with a stick which he carried, so severe a blow over the knuckles, that he dropped the purse; while at the same moment, seizing him by the throat, he forced him backwards, and, putting out his leg, tripped him up, and flung him heavily to the ground. Placing his foot upon the breast of his fallen foe, to prevent his rising, he turned towards the frightened girls, and, lifting his hat so as to display his dark chestnut curls, he said, courteously—

"Do not be alarmed, ladies, I am quite able to protect you."

Then pointing to the fallen man with his stick, which he slightly shook at him with a menacing gesture, he continued—

"Has the scoundrel robbed you of anything but the purse?"

As she turned to answer, Emily raised her eyes to the speaker's face. He was young, apparently not more than five or six and twenty; the exertion he had undergone had caused a bright flush to overspread his usually pale features; even at that moment his look was calm and spiritual; the prevailing expression of his face was power, which revealed itself in his flashing eyes, and stern, compressed mouth; his voice, when he spoke, sounded peculiarly rich and sweet. When Emily had informed him that, with the exception of the purse, they had sustained no loss, he continued—

"But he was struggling with you when I came up, he must, surely, have hurt you; are you quite uninjured?"

Both the girls having assured him that they were merely frightened, and that until the moment before he appeared, the man had simply been begging of them; the stranger turned to his prostrate foe, saying,—

"It would only serve you right for your unmanly attack upon two defenceless women, if I were to avail myself of the advantage I have gained over you to take you into custody and have you punished for the offence you have committed; but as I wish to spare these ladies the alarm of witnessing any farther struggle between us, I shall, with their permission, let you go; but mind this, I shall give a description of your appearance at the nearest police station; and if you do not immediately quit this part of the country, you will have rather more attention paid you than you will find by any means agreeable. So now take yourself off while you may."

As he spoke, he removed his foot from the scoundrel's breast, and, with difficulty restraining an impulse to bestow upon him a parting kick, allowed him to rise, and slink doggedly away. And now the Rosebud, who, between alarm and gratitude, and shyness, and an embarrassing consciousness that their champion was young and handsome, was altogether in a great state of agitation and excitement, felt it incumbent upon her, as spokeswoman, to express her sentiments as best she might. Accordingly, with some hesi-

tation and many blushes, which unfortunately the increasing darkness rendered invisible, she informed the stranger how very much obliged to him they were; and impressed upon his mind, the state of abject terror from which he had relieved them, glancing slightly at the anxiety they felt for the favourable termination of the combat, and their admiration of, and gratitude for, his heroic conduct.

The stranger received her acknowledgments with a quiet smile, partly pleased, partly amused by the young girl's eagerness, then, in a few simple, courteous, well-chosen words, he expressed the pleasure he had felt in having been able to render them such a slight service, adding, he should always consider it a most fortunate occurrence that, owing to a fancy which had seized him, to find his way from the railroad station across the fields, he had been enabled to arrive just at the most critical moment.

The Rosebud listened to him attentively. One thing was quite evident, be he whom he might, both his language and manner proved him a gentleman. Mysterious and deeply interesting! Could it be Prince Albert, wandering about the country in disguise, for some inexplicable purpose connected

with political economy; or the Admirable Crichton, suddenly "come alive," to seek for a wife in the nineteenth century?

The arrival of the "Pheeaton," which had been taken poorly, and obliged to have its wheel oiled, a process which, owing to the inefficiency of the blacksmith who (*faute de mieux*) had been called in to attend the patient, had occupied a longer portion of time than was by any means necessary, interrupted Emily's conjectures.

The mysterious stranger, as soon as he understood the connection between the vehicle and the damsels he had rescued, politely handed them in; and, refusing Caroline's timid offer of a seat, again raised his hat, and the carriage driving on, was soon lost to sight.

"Oh! Emily, what a brave, handsome, courteous, interesting creature!" exclaimed Caroline, enthusiastically; "who can he be?"

"I can't conceive; but we shall be sure to find out, for he is walking in the direction of Ashburn," was the reply. "He certainly knocked that dreadful man down very cleverly, and was extremely kind and goodnatured to us; but do you think him so very handsome?"

"Oh, there can't be a doubt about it. Those pale, interesting features; that lofty brow; those splendid flashing eyes; the dark clusters of his waving hair!"

"Carry, you've fallen in love with the man at first sight, and are a susceptible little goose; he is by no means the Adonis you make out; and, remember we know nothing about him; he may be a bagman for anything we can tell to the contrary," rejoined Emily.

"Now, I'm quite certain he is a gentleman, and most likely, something better still. He spoke just like Lord Adolphus Fitztoplofty, when I danced with him at the race-ball, and he asked me whether I'd seen the 'Prophète,' and if I didn't doat upon that dear Mario (so lucky that he should fix upon the only opera I'd ever heard, wasn't it?), and yet you pretend to believe he's a bagman; but I know you only say so to plague me, you naughty thing;" and thus speaking, Caroline relieved her overwrought feelings by giving her friend a playful blow, which the most fragile fly might have endured unshrinkingly.

"My dear child, I never hinted anything of the kind," returned Emily; "*au contraire,* I be-

lieve Lord Adolphus to be a thoroughly well-authenticated young nobleman, and consider him the most gentlemanly puppy I have ever met."

"Tiresome girl; you know I don't mean Lord Fitz. But I'll stake my penetration on the stranger's gentility; you only abuse him because you admire him so much that you are ashamed to own it, you mean, deceitful girl."

"Silly child, how can you be so absurd!" said the Rosebud; but, although it was so dark that, if she *had* blushed, her friend could never have discovered it, she turned away her head as she spoke.

CHAPTER IV.

SHUFFLING, DEALING, AND TURNING UP A KNAVE AND A TRUMP.

"TAKE this to Sir Thomas Crawley and tell him I am waiting."

The servant to whom the above direction was given, carried the card, to which it referred, to his master, who, lifting it from the silver waiter on which it was presented, read the following name,—"The Rev. Ernest Carrington."

"Shew the gentleman into the library, and bring candles there directly," said Sir Thomas; then, thrusting his fingers through the short, stiff, grey bristles, suggestive of a venerable, and well-worn scrubbing-brush, which constituted his head of hair—an action which, to any one acquainted with his habits, would have proved that he was

anxious and excited—he turned, and left the apartment.

When he entered the library, his excitement seemed to have increased, and taken a crabbed turn, for it was in no very cordial tone of voice that he addressed his visitor.

"If, as I presume, you have come here in consequence of my letter, I must say you have chosen a somewhat late hour for a business visit, young gentleman."

"I lost no time, sir, in making the necessary inquiries," was the reply. "Immediately on receiving your letter, I hastened to London, saw your solicitor, perused my grandfather's will, obtained the information I required, and came down by the first train which stopped at the Flatville station, and as your man of business informed me time was of importance, I would not wait till tomorrow, lest the delay might cause you inconvenience. If that is not sufficient apology for my untimely visit, I have none other to offer."

The calm, respectful, but at the same time perfectly self-possessed manner of the speaker, appeared to have the same kind of effect upon his auditor that the keeper's eye has upon some savage

animal, for he replied, in a more civil tone than he had yet used,—

"Yes, well—I see—yes. I am obliged to you for the prompt attention you have paid to my letter." He paused, then added, with affected indifference,—"About the entail; you find of course that the point raised was a wholly unnecessary one, and that your signature is a mere matter of form, to satisfy the absurd scruples of the party negotiating for the purchase; some people are so ridiculously cautious, ha! ha!" and here he laughed a forced, uneasy laugh.

"Such was by no means the view the solicitor, whom I consulted in town, appeared to take of the matter," was Ernest's quiet reply. "So far from it, that he declared, without my signature, the title was worthless; and that, if I were inclined to litigate the question, he had not a doubt, that I should gain my cause. The estates, he said, were clearly entailed; and, therefore, my grandfather could not alienate them without my father's consent, which, I need scarcely tell you, he never attempted to obtain."

Sir Thomas Crawley's brow grew black as midnight. "Preposterous," he said, "quite childish

and preposterous. I have taken counsel's opinion on the point, and they say you havn't a leg to stand on. You must have consulted some very ignorant person."

"On the contrary; it was Mr. S., of ——— street," replied Ernest, naming a gentleman whose reputation for legal knowledge and acumen was undeniable; "but," he continued, "it matters little, for I have no intention of raising the question. The *animus* of my grandfather's will is unmistakeable; he meant to leave every acre away from my father; and I should scorn to hold the estate on no better tenure than the juggling of a legal quibble."

"Then you are prepared to sign the paper resigning all claim upon the entailed estates, are you?" inquired Sir Thomas, eagerly.

"Yes, this very moment, if you choose," was the ready answer.

Sir Thomas paused an instant in thought ere he replied.

"There is no such extreme hurry: Mr. Selby, my country agent, will be here to-morrow morning, and can witness your signature. I am glad to find that you take such a sensible view of the matter.

I had feared you might have formed some rash hopes on the strength of my application; in fact, I was most unwilling to apply to you; but—but—"

"You found it impossible to make out a title which could sell the estate without so doing," interposed Ernest, in a tone of quiet politeness, in which it would have required perceptions quicker and more delicate than those of Sir Thomas Crawley, to have distinguished the covert satire that lurked beneath it.

"Exactly: one of those contemptible legal quibbles which you so justly reprobate," returned Sir Thomas; "however, I am glad to perceive you feel with me so completely. You will dine with me? and I have a bed very much at your service."

Ernest thanked him, but civilly declined. Sir Thomas, however, persisted, he would take no denial, and at length a compromise was effected, Ernest consenting to dine with his rich relative, on condition that he might return to the inn where he had left his valise, in time to write one or two letters of importance to go by the early post the next morning.

The dinner passed off agreeably enough; Ernest being one of those happily-endowed individuals

who, without falsifying their own opinions, or seeming the thing they are not, yet possess the talent of adapting their conversation to those with whom they are thrown in company, in such manner as to set them at ease, and draw out the best points of their characters.

Sir Thomas experienced the full influence of this fascination, and talked largely of his schemes for the amelioration of his tenantry; of plans for the revision and modification of the poor laws; of the advisability of erecting model lodging-houses for the industrial classes, &c. &c., until he had deceived his companion, and almost persuaded himself, into the belief that he was an enlightened philanthropist, overflowing with the milk of human kindness.

On his return to the inn at Ashburn, Ernest wrote the following letter to an old college friend who was junior partner in the office of the legal luminary to whom he had alluded in his interview with Sir Thomas Crawley.

"My dear Milford,—Since I saw you two days ago, I have got through a considerable amount of business, met with an adventure, and, in

short, condensed more active existence into the last eight-and-forty hours, than one often accomplishes in as many days. One thing I am delighted to tell you,—I have succeeded in procuring employment, which will more than provide for the few requirements without which one must degrade from the rank of gentleman. You can now, therefore, carry out the arrangement I explained to you, and settle the small residue of my poor father's property upon my sisters;—my mother, as you are aware, having (I own against my wishes) married again. Thanks to those unnaturally amiable railroad shares which my father bought just before his decease, and which have turned out a really good investment (I look upon anyone who, having gambled in railroads leaves off a winner, as I should at a rat, who, nibbling at a baited trap, carried off the cheese scatheless), they will thus be able to live in comparative comfort, especially on the Continent, which their tastes lead them to prefer. The employment I have obtained is not exactly to my liking, but I shall look out for a curacy if I find the duties of my position unbearably irksome. Owing to my wrangler's degree I distanced some half dozen competitors, and

obtained the post of classical and mathematical master at Doctor Donkiestir's well known school, almost as soon as I had entered my name as candidate. I begin my new duties the day after to-morrow, at which time the school meets.

"Having been thus enabled to place my sisters beyond the reach of poverty, my last scruple in regard to that which you are pleased to call my absurd Quixotism about the entailed estates, has vanished; and I, this evening, signified *in propriâ personâ* to Sir Thomas, my willingness to 'do a little bit of Esau,' as you irreverently term signing away my birthright;—and here, *par parenthèse*, let me observe that you are too much addicted to this style of Scriptural jesting—a fault the more to be reprehended because (as I find to my cost) it is decidedly infectious: *verbum sat!* The aforesaid 'Sir Thomas' seems, as far as one can judge on so short an acquaintance, by no means so black as he is painted; indeed, upon many of the great social questions of the day, his ideas coincide wonderfully with my own: he was polite in the extreme, though I must confess his amiability *followed* my declaration that I was willing to meet his wishes in regard to the entail.

"This epistle has run to such an unexpected length that I have no room to detail my adventure, and will merely stimulate your curiosity by adding that it was intensely romantic, and that it contained the elements of the two things which, in the old Trinity days, we esteemed the greatest pleasures in life; viz., a fight and a flirtation.

"In consideration of my cloth I indulged in the first sparingly, and abstained from the last entirely; though, as far as the twilight enabled me to judge, the provocation was a very fair one. I know the epithet this confession will obtain for me; but I had rather bear the ignominy of being considered a 'muff' than merit the designation of a 'fast parson;' and so fare thee well.

"Yours ever,

"ERNEST CARRINGTON.

"P.S.—Remember, my sisters are not to know that I am sacrificing anything to add to their income; you are merely to inform them that, my father's affairs being at length arranged, they will for the future be in the receipt of six hundred and fifty pounds per annum, instead of the four hundred which you before paid to them; and the delightful mist through which all women

regard business matters, will effectually prevent their making any further discoveries."

Having sealed his letter, Ernest betook himself to bed, and fell asleep as contentedly as if he had not sacrificed an estate worth 10,000*l.* to a chivalrous scruple, and a patrimony of 200*l.* a year, to brotherly affection.

Sir Thomas Crawley might consider him a weak-minded, good-natured fool; Milford designate him a "muff." But if there were a few more such muffs and fools in this realm of good King Mammon, that same kingdom might be better worth living in.

By ten o'clock the next morning he was again at Ashburn Priory; signed the deed, relinquishing all claim upon the entailed estates; shook hands cordially with the rich man who was thus scheming to defraud him; and started with a light heart, and still lighter purse, to carry his own carpet-bag seven miles to the railroad. About a mile from the station, a pony-chaise overtook him, driven by a stout serving-lad, and containing two gentlemanly-looking boys, dressed in mourning, and a ponderous trunk carefully corded

and directed. As this vehicle approached, Ernest, who had walked fast, paused to wipe his brow, at the same time resting his carpet-bag, which he had carried on a stick over his shoulder, upon the top of the last milestone.

The elder of the two boys regarded him attentively; then whispered something to the younger, who nodded and smiled in reply: making a sign to the driver to stop, the elder boy, addressing Ernest, began—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but you seem tired: we are going to the Flatville Station, and have a vacant seat at your service, if you please to accept it."

"I will, with the greatest pleasure," returned Ernest, "if you are sure we shall not overweight the pony."

"Oh, you need n't be afraid—you need not be in the least afraid of that, sir," interposed the younger boy, confidently. "Sampson can draw us; Sampson is as strong as ——"

"His Israelitish namesake, perhaps," suggested Ernest, placing his carpet-bag on the top of the trunk, and springing lightly into the pony-chaise.

"Well, *I* was going to say as strong as the Elephant and Castle," remarked the younger boy, with a look of profound sagacity; "but, perhaps, the original Sampson will do as well. What do you say, Percy?"

"I say that you are an absurd little chatter-box, Hugh, and I have little doubt the gentleman thinks so too," returned his brother,—for the reader need scarcely peruse the direction on the trunk, albeit written in Percy's plainest hand, to inform him that the boys were the two young Colvilles, then leaving home for the first time in their lives.

The parting had been a trying scene for all the persons concerned; and poor Hugh had only just recovered from the hearty cry in which even his incipient manly dignity could not preserve him from indulging, when they overtook Ernest.

"A chatter-box, perhaps, but not an absurd one," was the good-natured reply. "I feel particularly interested about the pony, I can assure you; have you had him long? I dare say he is a great favourite."

This speech, which was addressed to Hugh, was too much for the poor little fellow's fortitude, and

after a vain struggle to repress them, his scarcely dried tears sprang forth anew.

Percy threw his arm round him, and drew him affectionately to his side, as he said, in an explanatory whisper, "He is going to school for the first time, sir, and before he comes back, the pony we are so fond of, must be sold."

"And you?" enquired Ernest, interested by the boy's manner and appearance.

"I am older, and therefore better able to bear such little trials," was the reply. "Besides," Percy continued, in a lower tone, "my mother depends upon me to take care of him, and keep up his spirits, for he has no father now to protect him."

Ernest glanced involuntarily at their deep mourning, and there was a pause; for the circumstance brought vividly before his recollection a similar period of sorrow, when death had been busy among his own loved ones, and his father and a younger brother, of whom Percy strongly reminded him, had been called from this world of care, and sin, and sorrow, to that better land "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." The silence was at

length broken by Hugh, whose grief was a very April kind of affair, even at the worst of times.

"I suppose you're not going to school, sir, too?" he said, addressing Ernest, while a merry sparkle in his eye belied the simplicity the question indicated.

"Perhaps I may be," returned Ernest, smiling at the applicability of the question to his own situation. "If I should tell you that I were going to do so, would you believe me?"

"I don't think I should," replied Hugh, regarding him attentively. "People don't usually go to school when they've these things on their faces;" and as he spoke he, with a gesture half coaxing half arch, gave a gentle twitch to Ernest's curling whiskers.

Percy, afraid Hugh's sudden rush into intimacy might annoy the stranger, attempted to restrain him; but Ernest, with a good-natured smile, prevented him.

"Do not check him," he said; "our friendship will not end any sooner because it has begun rather rapidly." He then entered into conversation with the boys, choosing subjects in which he imagined

they would feel interest, and enlarging upon them so cleverly and amusingly, that ere they reached the station, he had completely captivated the fresh, warm hearts of his young companions.

"What will you say if I guess where you are going to?" he inquired of Hugh, as they drove up to the station.

"Why, if you guess right, I shall say you must be a conjurer," was the reply.

"I think you are going to Doctor Donkiestir's school at Tickletown. Am I right?"

"Quite, quite right," exclaimed Hugh, clapping his hands in delighted surprise; "but you *must* be a conjurer; how did you contrive to find it out?"

Ernest enjoyed his mystification for a minute or so; then, casting his eyes on the box, observed quietly, "I was taught to read when I was a good little boy; and your brother has written that direction so plainly, that I must have been blind if I had not been able to decipher it."

"Oh, you cheat! anybody could have done that," returned Hugh, contemptuously; "and I to think you a conjurer! Why, I expected to see you take twenty eggs out of an empty bag, and

make a boiled plum-pudding in your hat; like the man we saw perform last year. I say, Percy, it strikes me I 've been making a goose of myself."

"Very decidedly," was Percy's quiet reply.

CHAPTER V.

A FAST SPECIMEN OF "YOUNG ENGLAND."

THE railroad-station at Flatville was a large and central one, two or three branches converging at that point and joining the main line. A train from London was due before that by which the Colvilles were to proceed, would start. Almost at the moment our little party arrived, it made its appearance, the engine snorting and puffing as though it were about to burst with spite at having been forced to draw so heavy a train at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

"This is the train by which our cousin Wilfred Goldsmith was to arrive; but it is so long since I last saw him, that I scarcely expect to recognize him," observed Percy.

"Oh! I hope we shall not miss him, for he will

take care that they don't put us into a wrong carriage and carry us off to some desolate island, where we shall never be heard of any more till we have been eaten by the savages, like Captain Cook; and then you know it will be too late," suggested Hugh.

"I will ensure you against that catastrophe," observed Ernest, "even if your cousin should not make his appearance; for I am going as far as Tickletown, and we will travel in the same carriage; see they are bringing them up now—follow me."

So saying, and having committed the important trunk to the care of an amiable and intelligent porter, Ernest selected a carriage, and the trio took their seats. Just before the train was about to start, an individual bustled up, followed by a porter carrying a writing-desk and a railway-rug glowing with all the colours of the rainbow. The moment the door was opened he sprang in with such energy as nearly to overturn poor Hugh.

"Beg your pardon, little boy, but 'pon my word I didn't see you—you ought to grow a couple of sizes larger to travel safe by rail; it was nearly a case of infanticide—a *spoilt* child, as somebody calls

it. That'll do, Velveteens" (this was addressed to the porter); "gently with that writing-desk if *you* please; there's all my personal jewellery and several £500 notes in it. That's the time of day; sorry the directors set their faces against tipping, but the first occasion on which we meet in private life, half-a-crown awaits you; till then, Velveteens, as the Archbishop says in the play, accept my blessing."

The speaker was either a very small man, or a large boy dressed in adult clothing—at first sight it was not easy to determine which—till closer observation detected in the breaking voice, now hoarse now shrill, the youthful complexion and straggling unformed figure, sufficient evidence that the latter hypothesis was the correct one. His outer boy was encased in a rough, very loose pea-jacket, with preternatural buttons, a pair of the very "loudest" checked trousers, *real* Wellington boots, with heels not above three inches high, a shawl round his neck, in regard to which even Emily's perfidious shopman might have been believed had he declared the colours to be indisputably *fast*, while a velvet travelling-cap with a bullion tassel, completed his costume. Having wrapped his rug round his lower limbs, and gone through a

most elaborate pantomime of making himself comfortable, he condescended to favour his companions with a glance of patronizing scrutiny; apparently satisfying himself, by this means, that they were sufficiently respectable to be honoured by his conversation, he turned to Ernest, saying—

"Fine open weather this, sir—jolly for the hunting—none of your confounded frosts to-day—regular break-up yesterday evening, and been thawing like bricks ever since—fond of hunting, sir?"

"I consider it a fine, manly sport, but too dangerous for little boys to be allowed to indulge in," returned Ernest, drily.

Either not detecting, or more probably purposely ignoring, the covert satire of this speech, the fast young gentleman appeared to agree in the sentiment:

"Yes; that's true enough," he said: "for instance, I would n't advise this small shaver" (indicating with a motion of the eyelid Hugh, who sat watching him with breathless astonishment) "to trust himself across country outside a horse; but when one has come to—ahem! years of discretion, and learned how to take care of oneself, the purpose for which divines tell us we are sent into the world, why the more hunting one gets the jollier, I say."

"Have you ever been out hunting yourself, may I ask?" inquired Ernest, fixing his penetrating glance full on the boy's countenance; who, despite his fastness, was not, when asked a straightforward question, prepared to tell an actual lie, though, to adhere to the exact truth would have made his previous remarks appear singularly inconsistent and uncalled for; accordingly he answered—

"Ar—well—yes—oh! of course I've been out hunting—ar—not exactly on horseback, perhaps, but it's just the same thing, you know;—what a shocking slow train this is to be sure—they hardly do their five and thirty miles an hour: I shall certainly write to the *Times* about it, if they don't mind what they're at."

During this speech, Hugh's sharp eyes had deciphered the direction on the important writing-desk, containing the jewellery and the incalculable number of £500 notes, and he promulgated the result of his discovery thus:—"'Wilfred J. Goldsmith, Esquire': what! are *you* our cousin Wilfred? why I took you for a gentleman!"

"Oh, Hugh!" exclaimed Percy, scandalized at his brother's rudeness.

"No, I don't mean that," continued Hugh quickly,

while Ernest turned away his head to hide an irrepressible smile; "I mean I took you for a grown up gentleman, and not a boy like Percy, you know."

This involuntary tribute to the man-about-town-like adultness of his manners and appearance, delighted Wilfred Jacob more than the most elaborate compliment courtier could have devised; at length he had found some one to believe in him, and to take him at his own valuation, and he adopted and steadily patronized Hugh, from that time forth. He was much too wide-awake, however, to allow this to appear; replying in the off-hand manner which he affected —

"Rather an equivocal compliment that, young 'un; but I expect it was better meant than expressed; so I'll take the will for the deed, as the lawyer's clerk did after he'd mixed the 'dog's-nose' rather too stiff at his early dinner. 'Always give credit for good intentions' is a copy old Splitnib (so called from an analogy between his professional avocations, and the fact of his having, in bygone hours, fallen over a form and divided the bridge of his own proboscis) will set you writing before you are many days older; and in me you behold a living embodiment of the precept."

"How was it we did not see you at the station, Cousin Wilfred?" inquired Percy; "we waited as long as we dared, till we thought we should lose the train, looking for you."

"Why, you see, my dear boy," began Wilfred, stretching out a boot beyond the rainbow-coloured wrapper, for the purpose of tapping it admiringly with a dandyfied little cane, "leaving the modern Babylon by the seven o'clock A.M., I necessarily breakfasted early; and as, according to Cocker, the interval between six A.M. and one P.M. embraces seven hours, I experienced, on my arrival at the Flatville station, the very uncomfortable sensation of nature abhorring a vacuum in my breadbasket; and as even Curtius himself could scarcely have contrived to fill up a similar gulf by jumping down his own throat, I walked first into the refreshment room, and then into a basin of mock-turtle soup. A deucedly pretty gal it was who handed it to me, too; uncommon attentive she was to be sure: in fact, *entre nous*," he continued, leaning confidentially towards Ernest, "it strikes me she wasn't altogether insensible to the personal attractions of 'yours truly'—do you twig?"

Ernest smiled as he replied, "Of course she

charged for her admiration, as well as for your luncheon."

"Real turtle as well as mock, eh? I hope you don't mean any insinuation about a calf's head too! But, now you mention it, I *do* think seven-and-sixpence was rather high for a basin of soup,—ah! the women, they make sad fools of us youth; but, as the old lady piously remarked, when her pet dog died of repletion, 'such is life, which is the end of all things,'—heigh-ho!"

Having relieved his feelings by venting a deep sigh, Master (he would have annihilated us for so calling him) Wilfred Jacob, who appeared gifted with an interminable flow of conversation, and an insatiable delight in listening to his own voice, again addressed his companions, exclaiming—

"I tell you what it is, gentlemen: the cares of existence, and the heartlessness of that deluding mock-turtle soup gal, are weighing upon my spirits to such a degree, that nothing short of a mild cigar can bring me round again: that is, always supposing you, none of you, entertain a *root*ed aversion (you perceive the pun?) to the leaves of the Indian herb."

"I presume you are aware that smoking in a

first-class carriage is against the rules of the railway company," suggested Ernest.

"I know that some such prejudice exists in their feeble minds," was the rejoinder; "but they are not obliged to learn anything about it, are they? 'where ignorance is bliss,' you know."

"The first porter who opens the door is certain to perceive the smell; and of course if he inquires whence it proceeds, I shall not attempt to disguise the truth," returned Ernest.

"Never fear," was the reply; "even if such an alarming contingency were to accrue, I know a safe dodge to throw him off the scent."

"If I possessed any authority over you, I should strongly remonstrate against your violating such a wise and useful regulation," observed Ernest gravely.

"That fearful moral responsibility not resting upon your conscience—for which, as a philanthropist, I feel humbly thankful—I shall, with your leave, waste no more precious time, but go ahead at once." So saying, the young pickle drew from his pocket a small, neatly-finished leather case, well filled with cigars; having politely offered it in turn to each of his companions, who were unanimous

in their refusal, he selected a cigar, lighted it by means of a piece of German tinder, and, placing it in his mouth, began puffing away with equal zest and science.

Having set it going to his satisfaction, he removed it for a moment, and, emitting a graceful wreath of smoke, resumed—"Capital good cigars these—came from Fribourg and Pontets—I never smoke any others—better change your mind and take one, Mr. —— 'pon my word your name has escaped me?"

"Are you quite certain you ever knew it?" inquired Ernest, whilst a smile of quiet intelligence curled his handsome mouth.

In no degree disconcerted, Master Wilfred took another long pull at his cigar ere he replied, "Not to be done, eh, sir? Well I respect a man all the more for being unpumpable; dodginess in all its branches is the virtue I most venerate."

"And what *is* dodginess, please, Cousin Wilfred," inquired Hugh, upon whose youthful intelligence slang was, for the first time, dawning with all its fascinating eloquence.

"Dodginess, my verdant young relative, is a psychological attribute compounded of equal por-

tions of presence of mind and fertility of resource, which enables every 'cove' (cove is a generic appellation for indiscriminate male humanity), thus happily endowed, to rise superior to all the minor obstacles of existence; as, for example,—when I, trying to pump the gentleman opposite in regard to his patronymic, was by him foiled in my attempt, and convicted of the logical absurdity of having declared myself to have forgotten that which I had never known; or again,—when, this morning, my governor, your venerable uncle, who, benighted innocent that he is, hopes to coerce me into giving up smoking, took from me my cigar-case, but allowed me to regain it by picking his pocket thereof, while squabbling with the cabman for an extra sixpence;—mind you recollect all this, for, in these days, slang is completely the language of fashionable life. Were I that epitome of slowness, the 'father of a family,' I should have the young idea taught to clothe itself in slang from the cradle upwards. And now as I've a notion the train is approaching a station, and my cigar has arrived at its terminus, you shall witness a specimen of dodginess with your own eyes;—be silent and observe me attentively—ahem!"

He then flung the end of his cigar out of window, and, assuming an air of great consequence, waited till the train stopped; the moment it did so, he summoned a porter.

"Porter, open the door!" The man obeyed. "Put your head in and tell me what this carriage smells of."

The porter, looking surprised at the request, complied—"It smells tobaccer-efied like to me," he observed after a minute's investigation.

"Tobaccerefied indeed!" repeated Wilfred Jacob, in a tone of the deepest indignation; "some brute has been smoking in this carriage, I'm certain of it! a first-class carriage, too. I tell you what, porter, when gentlemen pay for the comfort and convenience of a first-class carriage, they expect to enjoy what they pay for, and not to be poisoned alive with the odour of tobacco."

"Smoking ain't never allowed in the fust class, sir," pleaded the embarrassed porter.

"It may not be allowed, but *it has been done*," was the captious reply: "I'll take my oath some one has been smoking in this carriage; I'm as certain of it as if I'd seen 'em myself; my nose never deceives me;—what's your name?"

"My name be Johnson; but I'll call the station-master to speak to you, sir."

"By no means; it's no fault of his," replied Wilfred, hastily, feeling anything but desirous that a more enlightened intellect should be brought to bear upon the question: "no, I shall write to the directors, to complain, and call you to witness that I mentioned the fact at the first station we stopped at. It's absurd to pretend to make rules, and then suffer them to be broken in this way. Shut the door; I shall remember your name — Johnson!" and as he uttered the last word, the train started.

His companions exchanged glances: Percy's expressed disapproval; Hugh's mingled surprise and delight; while Ernest was so much amused at the boy's ready wit and cool impudence, that, for the life of him, he could not reprove him for the deception.

When the recollection of this little incident had, in some degree, worn off, Percy asked his cousin how he liked Doctor Donkiestir's school; and begged him to tell them a little about the manners and customs of the place to which they were going.

"Put you up to a thing or two, eh? Give you some small insight into the time of day? Well, I suppose, as it's all in the family, and you're Tickletonians yourselves, or about to become so, it's no breach of confidence. *You* won't split, sir?" he continued, appealingly, to Ernest. "Honour amongst thieves, eh?"

"You may trust me," was the concise reply.

"First tell me, upon your honour, that you are not a friend of any of the masters, then," stipulated Wilfred.

"Upon my honour I am not a friend of any of them," was the slightly Jesuitical reply.

"That's all right then. You look like a brick (I'm a bit of a physiognomist you see), so I'll trust you. In the first place, masters: there's the Doctor, *alias* old Donkey, *alias* (his name is John) Jackass, with sundry other derivatives, more caustic than complimentary. Well, he's not altogether a bad sort of fellow, only he makes a fuss about trifles; and is especially jealous if he fancies that any one appears likely to interfere with what he calls his prerogative; in fact, he would be a stunner if his temper did not stand in his way; but, on the whole, the boys like him, and so look over his

little failings. Then, there's a sort of second master, 'Mat and Clat' we call him, which is short for mathematical and classical; but we are changing horses in that quarter, so, till we have tried the new animal (pretty well tried he will be, too, before we've done with him, I expect), it's impossible to say how he may suit us; only, if he ain't a tolerably wide-awake cove, I pity him; for, between master and boys, he'll have a sweet time of it, poor devil! Then there are two ushers—Hexameter and Pentameter (familiarly Hex. and Pen.), so termed because one is six feet high and the other scarcely above five: they are not gentlemen, therefore they don't act as *sich*, so of course we 'chouse' and bully them as much as we dare. Then there's old Splitnib, a coach of the most unmitigated slowness, but who writes a wonderful hand; and, finally and lastly, Monsieur Beaugentil, the French master, who is more involuntarily comic than all the rest of his frog-devouring nation put together. These worthies rule, and are ruled by, a floating capital of some two hundred boys, more or less, of whom the eldest may be about seventeen or eighteen, and the youngest on a par with this juvenile shaver here."

"And do you work very hard?" inquired Percy.

"Not we," was the reply. "Of course, for decency's sake, we do something. It don't pay for a fellow to be quite an ignorant fool in these days, unless he happens to have been born a lord, or experienced some such jolly dispensation at starting; but as for hard work,—no thank ye. What's the use of having a fag, if you can't get your exercises done for you, I should like to know?"

"What's a fag?" inquired Hugh.

The first effect of this apparently simple question was to throw the person to whom it was addressed into a state of the most violent laughter. As soon as he could recover breath, he gasped out, "Oh, lor! it's very fatiguing; you'll be the death of me with your blessed innocence, that you will."

After a less severe relapse, he continued, "*You*'ll soon know what fagging means, you poor, unfortunate, green little warmint; though I think I shall honour you by taking you myself. I've a right to a fag now I'm in the fifth form; and the chap I had last half, has left. You seem a jolly, good-tempered little beggar, and I shouldn't like to see you made miserable."

"He shall never be ill-used while I am alive," exclaimed Percy, with flashing eyes.

"That's a very proper and plucky sentiment on your part, my dear boy," returned Wilfred; "but it's a precious deal easier to talk about than to act upon. You can't thrash a whole school, especially when some of them are almost men grown. Such chaps as Biggington or Thwackings, who can polish off a coalheaver in sporting style, for instance, your namesake Hotspur himself would have found such fellows as them tough customers. All you can do with them is to keep 'em in good humour while you can, and get out of their way when you can't."

"But all this time you have not told me what a fag is," interrupted Hugh.

"Well, a fag is a small boy, taken possession of by a larger boy, according to an old established precedent, against which the masters set their faces in vain. The small boy thus enslaved is termed a fag, and his duties are to do everything the larger boy finds it impossible, or disagreeable to do himself. If the small boy performs these duties zealously and goodhumouredly, he is only kicked and driven about like a dog, and survives to become

a fifth, and *ev*entually a sixth form boy, and takes his change out of fags of his own. If he sulks, or neglects orders, he is either half or threequarters murdered, according to the hands he falls into, and is usually taken away from the school, or otherways expended, before he reaches hobble-de-hoy's estate. And now, have I made that clear to your juvenile capacity?—Yes?—Then mind you profit by it, or I shall have to show you practically how Tickletonians tickle," and as he spoke, he pointed suggestively to his cane, though a good-natured twinkle in his eye contradicted the threat.

Having thus broken ground, he favoured the company with a series of dissolving views, illustrating various episodes of Tickletonian life, wherein were vividly pourtrayed scrapes got into and out of with much ability, and more impudence, by certain scholastic heroes, past and present; but the gist of each anecdote lying in the discomfiture or mystification of one or more of the masters, it is scarcely to be supposed, giving Wilfred Jacob credit for the most open disposition imaginable, that he would have been quite so communicative, had he divined the capacity in which Ernest Carrington was then journeying to Tickletown.

When they reached the station at which they were to alight, an omnibus, provided by Doctor Donkiestir, was in waiting to convey any of his scholars who might arrive by that train. Ernest, who was not to present himself till the following morning, and had availed himself of the opportunity to accept the invitation of an old college friend, from whom he had originally heard of the vacancy, here took leave of his young companions, saying, as he did so—

"Good by. As I should not much wonder if we were to meet again sooner than you at all expect, I wish you to remember, that if at any time you require advice or assistance, you will find a friend in Ernest Carrington."

He then took Wilfred's arm, and drawing him aside, observed,—"I have allowed you to run on in a way which I am sure you would have endeavoured to avoid had you known who I was. I did so, not from any mean wish to entrap you into confessions of which I might afterwards make use to your disadvantage, but simply in order to gain some insight into your true character; and now I will make a compact with you: as long as you behave kindly towards your two cousins, who interest me

exceedingly, and befriend them as your superior knowledge of the world" (the slightly ironical emphasis with which he pronounced the last few words was not lost upon his auditor, who, for once in his life, felt conscious that he had made himself ridiculous), "and especially of the little world comprised in a boy's school, will enable you to do, I shall forget anything I may have heard this morning. I will only add, that I have misjudged your character if you consider the condition I have proposed a hard one."

"Before I attempt to make a suitable reply to your mysterious and startling communication, allow me, sir, to inquire, in the most respectful manner possible, first, *who* you are; secondly, *what* you are?" returned Wilfred Jacob, in a quieter tone than he had yet made use of.

"The Rev. Ernest Carrington, classical and mathematical master (or, familiarly, Clat. and Mat.) in Dr. Donkiestir's school at Tickletown, at your service," was the reply.

The first effect of this announcement was to elicit from the "fast young gentleman" a prolonged and expressive whistle; next came an aside, "Well, if I haven't gone and put my foot in it

deepish *rather*, it's a pity." Then, turning to Ernest, he asked, abruptly,—

"'Pon your honour, as a gentleman, Mr. Carrington, if I stick to the young Colvilles like a trump, you won't peach?"

"Upon my honour," was the frank reply.

"It's a bargain, then," rejoined Wilfred. "And now, sir, before we sink the amenities of social life, in the less jovial relation of master and pupil, allow me the honour of shaking hands with you, while at the same time you must permit me to express my opinion, that your conduct has been brickish in the extreme."

With a smile called forth by the peculiar phraseology, and strange admixture of good feeling and never-failing impudence, of his new ally, Ernest shook hands with him good-naturedly, and turned to depart; but Wilfred Jacob detained him.

"One slight additional favour would oblige," he said. "A discreet silence in regard to the cigar episode would be a desirable addenda to our compact. Our friend Donkiestir has prejudices—*verbum sat*—a nod is as good as a wink. Farewell; 'we meet again at Philippi.'"

So saying, he bowed low, removing a very shining new hat, wherewith he had replaced the gorgeous travelling cap, and hurried after his cousins, who were by this time seated in, and sole tenants of the omnibus, where they presented, so to speak, a very forlorn and castaway appearance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSPIRACY.

"Oh, Percy, have you heard the news?" inquired Hugh, eagerly, some five weeks after his arrival at Tickletown; and as he spoke, he began dancing and clinging round his brother in a state of the greatest excitement.

"What news, Hugh?" returned Percy, who, seated at his desk, was writing with the greatest assiduity.

"Oh, then, you have n't heard," resumed Hugh. "Well, you know that a company of actors are performing at the Tickletown Theatre, and that all the boys are mad to go and see them; and no wonder either, for, from what Wilfred and others, who have seen one in London, say, a play must be the most wonderful, glorious, jolliest, brickish-est

thing going." Hugh was making surprising advances in slang, under his cousin's able tuition; his progress in dear Doctor Valpy's Latin Delectus, was by no means equally rapid.

"I know what you have told me; but I know, also, that the Doctor has expressly forbidden any of the boys, even the sixth form, to go to the theatre, on pain of expulsion. His reason, and it seems to me a good one, being, that he cannot exercise any surveillance (that means care, or watchfulness) over them, if they are allowed to be out late at night," returned Percy, gravely.

"Yes; but you don't know that the manager has written to the Doctor to say that he will give a morning performance, and select only pieces of which the Doctor shall approve, if he will allow the boys to go, and the dear, good, jolly old Doctor has said 'yes,' and granted a half holiday next Thursday for the purpose, and I 'll never call him old Donkey any more, if Biggington kills me for refusing. But Percy, dear Percy, do you think there is any chance that we could go?"

Now, although at first sight this question would appear a very simple one, it was by no means so easy to answer as might be imagined. In

the first place, Percy had a vague and indistinct notion that his mother disapproved of theatrical entertainments; certainly, as far as his own personal feelings were concerned, the recent loss he had sustained, with all its painful consequences, rendered him indisposed to enjoy any such amusement.

Then, again, on the score of expense: their pocket-money was very limited, Hugh being allowed sixpence, Percy a shilling a week, — a sum which was barely sufficient to supply slate-pencils, ink, peg-tops, clasp-knives, "toffy," and all the other innumerable and incomprehensible *sine quâ nons* of a public school-boy's existence.

Although he had suffered both obloquy and inconvenience on account of the paucity of his funds, Percy had resolved that, during their first quarter, nothing should induce him to apply to their mother for more; and, when Percy had resolved upon a thing, because he considered it a matter of principle, Hugh was aware that Gibraltar itself was not more immoveable.

It was, therefore, with rather a blank expression of countenance that he replied to his brother's inquiry of what it would cost;—

"The admission is to be half-a-crown each."

"Then we cannot go," returned Percy; "for I have not been able to save any of my allowance, neither do I imagine have you."

One reason why Percy found a difficulty in saving was, that Hugh was for ever losing things which must be replaced, or breaking things which required mending, or earnestly desirous of something or other which Percy could not bear to see him wishing for in vain,—for be it known, that unless some matter of deep feeling, or right principle, were concerned, his elder brother spoiled Hugh as thoroughly and unconsciously as anybody. Thus, in point of fact, Master Hugh spent, in addition to his own sixpence, some ninepence out of every shilling of Percy's.

But Hugh's selfishness was a fault of which he was himself perfectly unaware. Not being of, what minor modern treatises on Christian ethics consider it the thing to term, "an introspective habit of mind," and knowing that if Percy required such a sacrifice, he would willingly allow his right hand, the hand with which he played marbles, to be cut off in his service; he was so accustomed to consider that, because he was the younges

everything was to be given up to him, that he forgot the injustice of such an arrangement.

"Not a halfpenny," was Hugh's reply; "that cake woman cleaned me out yesterday. What a goose I am to be so fond of cakes; but I like to have enough to give some to the other fellows too, and all we little chaps have a weakness for cakes;—but have *you* got no money?"

Percy shook his head. "Breaking windows, and losing other boys' balls, are expensive amusements, Hugh," he said. "Remember, I have got you out of several scrapes of that kind since we have been here. Of course, I was glad enough to do so; but I only mention it to account for my being nearly as poor as yourself. A shilling a week is soon exhausted."

Hugh paused in deep perplexity; at last he said slowly, and in a hesitating voice, "Mama would send us the money, I think, if you would not mind writing to tell her that you had no objection, and that I wished to go so very, *very* much."

"But I should mind writing for such a purpose," returned Percy; "and I will explain to you why: since dear Papa's death, Mama has been very poor, and she is likely to be poorer still, I am afraid, for

she writes me word that Sir Thomas Crawley still persists in his demand, and Mr. Wakefield is afraid she will have to pay it whenever a new clergyman is appointed."

"How wicked! how cruel of Sir Thomas!" interrupted Hugh vehemently; "and he as rich as an old Jew, too;—I hate him!"

"Gently, Hugh, you must not speak in that way; every man has a right to obtain anything the law of the land will award him. But now I have told you this, I am sure you would not wish me to write and ask Mama to send us money to be spent in amusement, which she must deny herself and Emily the actual necessaries of life in order to procure." Percy waited for an answer with some anxiety, but, in a matter of feeling, Hugh would never have been likely to occasion him disappointment.

"Do not write for the world, Percy," he said; "I would rather never see a play in my life, than grieve dearest Mama. Oh, Percy! I wish I were a man, then I'd work hard, and keep her and Emily, and give them pleasures and luxuries, and make them quite happy; and as for Sir Thomas, I'd punch his head for him, as Wilfred says."

So saying Hugh returned the caress his delighted

brother bestowed on him, and walked off manfully. But his courage only lasted till he had made his way into an old hay-loft over a large rambling stable, capable of holding twenty horses, but now devoted to the use of the Doctor's fat pony, and a cow and calf, also the property of that dignitary. Having reached his hiding-place, his fortitude gave way, and he bewailed his disappointment with a hearty cry; for he was but a child after all, poor little fellow! and a spoiled one as well, and to such, however differently advanced Christians may appreciate the quality, self-denial appears a very harsh and uncomfortable virtue.

On the morning of the important day, a fresh trial awaited him; Wilfred Jacob, who had thoroughly fulfilled his promise to Ernest Carrington, by saving Hugh from ill-usage, and Percy from many of the annoyances to which his proud, sensitive nature, rendered him peculiarly susceptible, as soon as breakfast was concluded shouted vociferously for his fag,

"Hugh! Hugh Colville! where has the young warment hidden himself; oh! there you are; come here you imp of darkness, I shall have to give you that thrashing I've owed you so long,

I know I shall, and, when it does come, old Bogie have mercy on your precious bones! for I shall have none. Now, listen to me; the moment morning school is up, cut away like a flash of greased lightning, and turn out my things to dress. Let me see—I shall wear—hold up your head, sir, and look attentive!—I shall wear—ahem!—my white d'Orsay overcoat; the light blue coatee with fancy silk buttons; the pink satin under-waistcoat; the green embroidered vest with coral buttons; the blue neck-tie with crimson ends; the MacFerntosh plaid trousers, those with the green ground and broad red, and blue, and white checks over it; and the polished boots—do you twig? Now, then, repeat it all, that I may be sure you've taken it in correct."

"D'Orsay wrap; blue coatee; pink under, green and coral over vests; blue and crimson choaker; MacFerntosh sit-upons; and japanned trotter-cases," returned Hugh, gabbling over the different items with the velocity at which tradition has decreed it proper to inform society that "Peter Piper picked a peck of pepper."

"Bravo! young 'un, you improve apace; but you took to slang uncommon kindly from the first,

I will say that for you. Well, when you've looked out the toggery, and—ahem!—brought me my shaving water;—I've felt, for some time past, a tickling sensation at the sides of my face, which, I am sure, indicates the approach of whiskers. Ar—I should be rather a good-looking fellow if I had but got whiskers, I flatter myself; would'nt I wear 'em bushy, that's all. As soon as you've done all I've told you, jump into your own juvenile habiliments, and be ready to go with me at a moment's notice."

"But—but you know, Wilfred, I'm not to go," faultered poor Hugh.

"Not to go, why not? Who says so? What! has Percy cut up rough, with his sanctified, Puritanical, Puseyitical, pontifical, hieroglyphical notions; oh! I'll soon talk him round;—I've the highest possible respect for morality and piety and all that sort of thing, particularly on Sundays, but to fancy they've got anything to do with going to the play, is an association of ideas little short of downright sacrilege, to my notion."

"No, it is not that," returned Hugh; "Percy would have let me go, only—"

"Only what?" inquired Wilfred; "come, make

haste, I've got thirty lines of Terence to knock off before I go up to Carrington."

"Only we've both spent our allowance, and I've not got money to pay," replied poor Hugh, fairly driven into confessing his poverty.

"Phew!" whistled his patron, "no assets forthcoming, eh; that's unfortunate, all the more so, because just at the present epoch my own financial arrangements are in a somewhat embarrassed condition—ar—banker's account overdrawn—owing to their confounded free-trade, I expect, I can't get my rents paid up,—in fact, to be frank with you, when this play business was first started, I, with incautious liberality, volunteered to make one of a jovial crew of fifth-formers, who intend to follow up the theatrical entertainments with a sort of posthumous *déjeuné à la fourchette* of oysters and porter. Well, sir, when I came to examine into the state of my funds, I, after much deep and intricate calculation, arrived at the following result, viz., that I had contracted liabilities to the amount of one pound five, while to meet them I possessed the exact sum of two shillings and threepence-halfpenny—the half-penny being scarcely an efficient coin of the realm, by reason of my having that morning

punched a large hole in its centre, for a mechanical experiment which failed. Under these circumstances I immediately wrote to the governor, saying that several unusually distressing cases of charity having come under my notice since I had last received his blessing and a ten pound note, the blessing alone remained; adding that another case more urgent than any of the former now appealing to my sympathies, I trusted he would not object to replace the money without unnecessary delay. They say it is a wise child who knows his own father; certainly in this particular instance I seem to have formed a strangely mistaken estimate of the manners and customs of mine, for yesterday morning I received from him the following heartless reply:—

"'DEAR WILFRED JACOB,—As I happen to know your charity is of the kind which begins and ends at home, and as two pounds a week is rather more than I wish you to spend on lollipops, I strongly recommend total abstinence from such delicacies for the next fortnight, at the expiration of which period you may look for a five pound note (the last you will receive before the holidays), from

"'Your affectionate Father.'

"Well, my father being thus obdurate, the only alternative that remained for me was to apply to my uncle, in consequence of which application my watch will have a little extra *ticking* to do for the next fortnight; my relation, on the security of that valuable, favouring me with the loan of five and twenty shillings. Thus, the admission to the theatre being two and sixpence, you will perceive, by a reference to 'Smith's Wealth of Nations,' I am still twopence-half-penny behind the world, which sum I must beg, borrow, or otherwise realize before two o'clock to-day, at which time the doors open. So you see, young 'un, I literally cannot treat you, for which, without chaffing, I'm really uncommon sorry;—but never mind, put your trust in jollity, and depend upon it something to your advantage will turn up some day," and with this well-meant, but slightly vague attempt at consolation, Wilfred Jacob passed on to have, as he termed it, a "go in" at Terence.

In the meantime, a solemn and important discussion was being held among the boys of the sixth form (some of whom were lads of seventeen and eighteen, and considered themselves young men), as to whether these morning theatricals, being got up

solely with a view to the juveniles, were not *infra dig.* Biggington, who had grown up to fit his name, and stood six-feet-one in his stockings, and who moreover, in virtue of the date of his entrance, as well as from his strength and prowess, was looked upon as leader of the school, decidedly set his face against it, and declared, with unnecessary vehemence of expression, that the play might be—that to which its author would have especially objected—before he would go to see it.

Stradwick quite agreed with him, which fact possessed every advantage but that of novelty; Stradwick being a mere reflection, and by no means a brilliant one, of Biggington.

Fowler also considered the thing would be infernally slow, nothing sporting about it; besides Jackass (alas for boy nature that so could paraphrase the respectable name of Doctor John Donkiestir!) was going himself, and would have nothing to do but to watch them, so that if a fellow happened to sneeze, he would be safe to get an imposition for winking at an actress; for his part he'd rather be in school at once.

Norman and Piper followed on the same side; Swann, Pitt, Kitely, Martin, and Jones, agreed

with the foregoing, but had an original opinion of their own, that old Donkey was growing superannuated.

On the other hand, Warmingham, Gaston, and some dozen others, although considering that an exception ought to have been made in favour of the sixth form, thought the measure a judicious one, as far as the little fellows were concerned, and were, therefore, prepared to pocket their dignity and go;—unless anybody had got anything better to propose.

"I tell you what, Gaston, that was not a bad notion of yours about an exception being made in favour of the sixth; surely if that were properly placed before old Jack, he could never be so besotted as to refuse," observed Fowler.

"Bravo, Fowler!" exclaimed several voices; "let us draw up a formal representation of the affair, and send a deputation with it to Jack."

"What do you say, Biggington?" inquired Fowler.

"Simply that I'll have nothing to do with it; I'll neither sign the address, nor head the deputation," was the sulky reply: "I consider I've demeaned myself too much to Jack already, in submitting to his absurd prejudices."

"Biggington and I view the matter exactly in the same light," observed Stradwick: "you'd all better give up the notion directly."

"Speak for yourself, stupid!" returned Biggington: "if Fowler and the rest like to try, let them, and they'll see what will come of it; my own feelings are purely personal. Don't you see, fool," he continued, drawing his satellite aside, "by the plan I adopt, they will do the dirty work, and, if they succeed, I shall profit by it; if they fail, I avoid the slight of having my request refused."

"Then what shall I do?" inquired Stradwick, who possessed just intellect enough to perceive that his rule of blindly following his leader would, in this case, annoy, rather than propitiate, the autocrat.

"Why—a—you see, you are—that is, we are differently—a—in fact, in your position I should decidedly sign the address; though—stop, wait a minute—on second thoughts it strikes me it may look odd to have every name but one on the list: Jack may think I've got some dodge in my head. Well,—never mind: if you like to follow my example you can," returned the slightly selfish Biggington.

Accordingly, Gaston, who was famous as a

scribe, wrote the address; and Fowler, and some half-dozen others, carried it up to the Doctor.

Doctor Donkiestir, who was a tall, fine-looking man, of about fifty, with a clever, energetic countenance, marked, however, by the stern, worried expression, common to schoolmasters, received the deputation courteously, read the address, and then observed—

"All the sixth appear to have signed this, except Biggington and Stradwick: why are their names absent?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Fowler, who was naturally of an open, fearless disposition, replied:—

"I believe, sir, Biggington preferred giving up going to the theatre, to asking a favour which he considered it unlikely you would grant; and Stradwick generally does whatever Biggington does."

As Fowler announced this well-known fact, a general smile, which even the Doctor's presence could not entirely restrain, went the round of the deputation.

The doctor seemed not to notice it, though a twinkle in the corner of his eye revealed to those

who knew his every look, that he was not so unobservant as he appeared.

"Biggington and his friend are very prudent," he said with a slightly ironical emphasis on the last word. He then paused a moment in thought ere he continued,—"I am very sorry that I consider it my duty to refuse your request, for the straightforward, gentlemanly way in which you have preferred it, has much pleased me; but I cannot believe that I should be fulfilling the trust reposed in me by your parents, if I were to allow you to be exposed to the temptations of a theatre, in a town, at night, when it would be impossible for me to exercise the slightest vigilance over you; and this applies more strongly to the sixth form than to the younger boys, as many of you are almost young men, and peculiarly liable to the evil influences to which I allude. As some compensation, I will grant a whole holiday, either for skating, if the weather permits, or boating, or cricketing, later in the season, whichever you may prefer. I hope, as a proof that you do not think I have been unnecessarily strict, the sixth will think better of it, and that I shall see many of their faces at the theatre this morning."

The Doctor's harangue was not without its effect, for Fowler (who, though somewhat of a pickle, was of a warm-hearted, generous disposition) thanked the head master for the promised holiday, and declared his intention of going to the morning performance. Gaston, Warmingham, and the rest of that party, followed his lead, and the deputation withdrew.

"So you 've eaten humble pie for nothing, been humbugged into promising to go to a childish affair you ought to be ashamed to be seen at, and been choused out of the only bit of fun and jollity that has come in our way this half. I wish you joy of your promised holiday, you good little boys," was Biggington's sarcastic speech, when he learned the result of their mission.

"Chaff away, Big-un," (a familiar abbreviation of Biggington's patronymic, of which only the *élite* of the sixth were permitted to make use) returned Fowler, good-humouredly. "Jacky's a stunning, good old fellow, after all, and I, for one, shall go, to show him I don't bear malice; you 'd better pocket your dignity for once, Big-un, and come too!"

"If I do I 'll be ——" (something naughty-ed),

was the unamiable reply; and, turning on his heel, Biggington walked angrily away, followed, at no great distance, by Stradwick, and two or three other recusants.

In spite, however, of their disapproval, the morning performance went off with great *éclat;* and those who attended it, amongst whom were a large proportion of the sixth form boys, raved about their delight to such a degree, that even Biggington, albeit he pretended to take the matter with a high hand, felt intensely provoked, and thrashed most unmercifully a small boy, who, in the innocence of his heart, incautiously promulgated his opinion, within the tyrant's hearing, that "any one who could have gone and did not, must be a precious slow coach and no mistake."

As for the fictions founded on facts, upon which the prolific imagination of Wilfred Jacob delighted to expatiate, they had such an effect upon poor Hugh, that he fairly cried himself to sleep that night, from sheer vexation and disappointment.

The next morning, a flashily dressed, sharp-looking young man, who was none other than the usher introduced by Wilfred Jacob into his description of the Tickletown masters by the nick-

name of Pentameter, but whose proper appellation was Sprattly, and who was, as Wilfred had truly stated, anything but a gentleman, approached a group, consisting of Biggington, Stradwick, and one or two others, with whom he appeared on the most intimate and confidential terms.

"I say, old fellows," he began; "is it actually true that the Doctor won't let you go to the theatre at night?"

"Yes, worse luck," was the reply.

"And are you going to stand it quietly?" continued Sprattly.

"Eh? why what can we do to help ourselves? If the whole of the sixth had stuck together, we might have made something of it; but that ass, Fowler, was talked over. He says Jack appealed to his feelings, or sympathies, or some such disgusting rubbish. So Fowler went, and took half the form with him; and altogether, if I was to express my true opinion, I think the whole affair is about as absurd, not to say disgraceful, to all parties as it well can be."

Norman, the speaker, was a tall, slender stripling about seventeen, with well-cut features and beautiful glossy hair of a raven blackness, which

he wore long, and evidently bestowed much care upon; but his cold, gray eyes, and the immoveable expression of his mouth, gave a clue to his true character, viz., a clear vigorous intellect, but a total deficiency of that which is commonly called heart. He was very anxious to leave the school, as a rich relation, who had taken a fancy to him, and intended to make him his heir, had purchased for him a commission in a cavalry regiment, on the strength of which he affected a *poco-curante* air; and possessing great natural powers of sarcasm, made himself feared and looked up to by the other boys. Outwardly he and Biggington were the greatest allies possible, but beneath the surface lay hidden a mine of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, which only required the application of a match to cause an explosion, the effects of which could scarcely be foreseen.

"It's an awful bore, really," replied Sprattly, "for my cousin Courtenay Trevanion ——"

"Which, being interpreted, means Jack Sprattly," interrupted Norman, sarcastically.

"No! come, really Norman, 'pon my life you're too bad. I told you of his being my relation quite in confidence. All theatricals have a

professional name, and a fellow may as well choose a spicy one as not, while he is about it," continued Sprattly; "but I was going to tell you about to-night. They are going to do the 'Beggars' Opera,' Cordelia Ophelia Elphinstone"—

"*Alias* Betsey Slasher," put in the incorrigible Norman.

"Plays 'Polly Peachum,'" continued Sprattly, not heeding the interruption. "Coralie, the French girl, does 'Lucy Lockit,' and Courtenay—or Jack, if you will have it so," he added quickly, perceiving that Norman was again about to speak—"Jack himself is cast for 'Macheath'; stunningly he'll play it too, for I heard him last winter—can't he just tip 'em, 'How happy could I be with either' in style?—Uncommon well he looks, too, in the highwayman's dress, red frock-coat, with gold frogs, and high shiny leather boots; but Jack's a regular spicy-looking fellow."

"Little too much of the lamps and sawdust about him," returned Norman, superciliously.

He paused a moment, then turning to Biggington, he said abruptly, fixing his piercing glance upon him as he spoke—

"Big., we must go to this affair."

Thus appealed to, the cock of the school, who at heart was more dunghill than game, like most other bullies, turned rather pale as he replied in a low voice—

"How is it to be done?"

"I have ideas on the subject," returned Norman, confidently; "but we need not trouble other folks with our private affairs. I don't exactly agree with Solomon about the advisability of a multitude of counsellors."

"If you're good for a spree I'll stick to you to the backbone," exclaimed Terry, a boy nearly sixteen, who was a thorough pickle at heart, and worshipped Norman, as Stradwick did Biggington, only with enthusiasm, instead of servility.

Stradwick, the remaining member of the party, was beginning slowly and gravely, "I shall do whatever Big——" when a shout of laughter from Norman, Sprattly, and Terry cut him short. As soon as Sprattly had sufficiently recovered from the effects of his hilarity to be able to speak, he observed—

"Well, if you naughty boys are determined to plot mischief, of course I must not hear it; only, if we *should* meet by any accident behind the

scenes of the theatre, I shall have much pleasure in introducing you to Polly Peachum and the fascinating Coralie; by-the-by, let me give you a hint: that stuck-up parson, young Carrington, is a precious sight more wide awake than the Don, so keep out of his way as much as you can," and having thus spoken, Pentameter Sprattly carried off his five feet four of vulgar humanity, with the most conceited air possible of underbred pretensions.

"What a thorough snob that unfortunate little Pen. has improved into," observed Norman, as soon as the amiable usher was out of earshot.

"He never was anything else since I've known the animal," returned Biggington, surlily; "that's him all the world over: he'll give a fellow information which he knows will set him raving to do a thing, and then come out with his humbugging, 'Well, you *would* do it; I *told* you you'd get into a scrape.' I wonder what his object now is?"

"Oh! merely to help his cousin, or, more likely brother, Jack," was the reply. "They're as much alike as two men can be, only our Spratt left off growing a couple of years too soon; if Jack draws a good house his salary

will be raised. And now I'll explain to you my plan, as far as it is at present matured;" and so saying, Norman unfolded to them a scheme—with the details whereof we need not trouble the reader—which, from his intimate acquaintance with the manners and customs of both masters and boys, he had been enabled to adapt to circumstances so cleverly, that even the cautious Biggington confessed he could only discover one flaw in it.

"And that is," he continued, "supposing everything to have gone smoothly up to the moment of our return, pray how are we to get in, when every door and window will be carefully closed and barred, and the Doctor's six-barrelled revolver, which he is so proud of, awaiting us if we make noise sufficient to rouse him?"

"I've ideas on that point, too," returned Norman, meditatively; "I'm certain I remember a window in that old loft over the stable, by which I used, when a little shaver, to get in and out through the school-room skylight: I must contrive to make some excuse for inspecting the premises."

"I'll tell you who knows more about the loft than all the rest of us put together," exclaimed Terry; "and that is little Colville: he has a pet

cat that resides in those parts, and he is constantly climbing and scrambling about up there, and has the place pretty much to himself, I suspect; for most of the juveniles have faith in a ghost, which Hugh Colville seems too plucky to care for."

"That was exactly my case some ten years ago," returned Norman: "find little Colville and send him here to me, and let us meet again in Biggington's room after morning school, when I will report progress, and the affair shall be finally arranged. Now be off with you, different ways: we must not be seen talking together too long."

And so with breasts more or less burdened by a consciousness of their evil secret, the conspirators parted.

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPTATION.

"Come here, Colville. How is your cat this morning?" inquired Norman, as Hugh approached, a good deal puzzled, and rather alarmed, at his summons, by reason of the fact that when a sixth form boy sent for one of the little fellows, the interview, however it might begin, usually ended by the juvenile coming in for a thrashing.

"Thank you, sir, she is very well," replied Hugh; then, judging from Norman's face that no very adverse fate awaited him, he continued, "If you please, sir, she caught a rat this morning, all her own self; such a monster, sir."

"Indeed! she must be a most meritorious and praiseworthy animal," returned Norman; then, anxious to set the little fellow at his ease before

he began to pump him, he continued—"How did you like the play yesterday? were you very much charmed?"

"I did not go, if you please, sir."

"Ha! how was that? Did the Doctor keep you in for a punishment, or don't you care about such things?" inquired Norman, pretty well foreseeing the answer.

"No, it was not that, sir," returned Hugh. "I should have been delighted to go; but I had spent all my pocket-money, and so could not pay for entrance."

"Unlucky for you—very," rejoined Norman; "I wish I'd known it sooner, I'd have tipped you the half-crown; more particularly as I want you to do something for me. You know the loft well?"

Hugh grinned, as he replied, "Every inch of it, sir."

"So used I when I was your age. Is not there a little square window, or trap-door, by which one can get on the top of the school-room, near the part of the skylight which opens? and which can be reached by standing on the Doctor's desk?" inquired Norman.

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "I often get up that way if the boys are plagueing me, and they don't dare to follow me because it is dark inside that part of the loft, and they are afraid of a ghost; but I'm sure there's no ghost, or else Puss would not leave her kittens there: if the kittens are safe, why should not I be?"

Norman smiled at this specimen of juvenile logic.

"That's right," he said, stroking Hugh's curly pate, "you're a plucky little fellow; and now show me this window. I want to see if I have forgotten the way."

"I'll show it to you, and willingly, sir," returned Hugh, whose affections were easily won, more especially when one of the sixth condescended to lay siege to them; "but you won't be able to get through yourself, now. You were a little fellow like me, I suppose, when you used to do so."

This information was what the immortal Dick Swiveller would have termed "a staggerer," and for a moment, Norman began to fear his scheme was knocked on the head; but possessing two main elements of greatness, namely,—presence

of mind and fertility of resource—an alternative occurred to him which, although by no means so safe or easy as his original plan, might yet be practicable. Everything depended on the character of the child before him: of its strong points he had already some experience, and felt satisfied that he might rely on them. The boy possessed pluck enough for his purpose: he had now to test his weakness.

"Suppose," he began—"mind, I only say suppose—there were yet a chance of your going to the theatre, what should you think of it?"

"Think? why I should be ready to jump out of my skin for joy, to be sure!" returned Hugh, his eyes sparkling, and his cheeks flushing at the bare idea.

Norman had gained a step:—he perceived the strength of the temptation he had to offer.

"Well," he said, after keeping Hugh in an agony of expectation for a minute or two, "there *is* a chance; but it must depend on whether you do exactly as I wish and approve. In the first place, promise me not to say a word to anybody about this conversation, or even mention that I have been talking to you;—in the second place,

come to me in Biggington's room, as soon as dinner is over."

"Please, sir, may not I tell Percy? I always tell him everything," pleaded Hugh.

"Did you tell him who broke the Doctor's ink-glass?" inquired Norman, sarcastically.

Now, this inquiry referred to a little affair which had occurred within a week of Hugh's first arrival at school. Indulging in that propensity, common alike to boys and monkeys, viz., of examining everything with their fingers' ends, Hugh had allowed to fall, and thus broken, Dr. Donkiestir's own peculiar ink-glass. Overwhelmed with the awful nature of the offence he had committed, and expecting, at the very least, to be flogged for the same, the poor child sat down by the side of the devastation he had caused, and commenced the uncomfortable operation of crying his eyes out.

In this forlorn condition he was discovered by Norman, who, without being really kind-hearted, possessed that not uncommon species of negatively selfish good-nature, which leads people to dislike to look on distress, physical or mental. Moreover, the fact of Hugh being a very pretty boy, pleased his taste, and therefore interested him. Accord-

ingly, he first inquired the cause of his grief, and then devised a remedy.

It so happened, that Norman's own ink-bottle and the one which Hugh had just broken, were, as nearly as possible, similar. He knew, moreover, that the Doctor was by no means observant of such minor particulars. He, accordingly, substituted his bottle for the broken one, assisted Hugh to clear away all traces of the accident, and advising him to keep his own counsel, left him greatly consoled. But Hugh felt a consciousness that there was something in this transaction of which Percy would not approve; and, fearful lest, in his strict sense of honour, he should pronounce it necessary to acquaint the Doctor with his delinquency, his moral courage failed him, and, up to the moment in which Norman asked him the question, he had never revealed the misdeed to his brother. It was the first time he had ever been guilty of that mildest form of lying, suppression of the truth; but the stone of dissimulation once set rolling, soon gathers force, which the feeble hand that sufficed to put it in motion, is powerless to restrain.

Nor was Hugh's first "little sin" fated to prove

an exception to the rule. Of course he was obliged to confess to Norman that he had not told his brother, and of course Norman replied that what he had done once, he could do again; and that if he cared to go to the play, he must not tell Percy or any one; and Hugh, not having a word to say in denial, the discussion ended by his promising to preserve a strict silence on the subject, and to come to Norman in Biggington's room.

In that same apartment was assembled, that afternoon, a solemn conclave. Biggington took *the* chair (there was but one); Stradwick drew a box from under the bed and seated himself upon it in an attitude exactly copied from that of Biggington; Norman, resting his elbow on the chimney-piece, remained standing; while Terry turned a wash-hand basin topsy-turvy, and perched himself, monkey-like, on the apex of the semi-cone thus created. After a moment's silence, Biggington exclaimed—

"Well, Norman, how are we going on? have you brought your plan to perfection yet?"

"Unforeseen difficulties have sprung up," was the reply, "but none which the three Ps, patience, perseverance, and pluck, will not carry us through."

"Difficulties be hanged," rejoined Biggington, impetuously. "I tell you one thing, go *I will*, by fair means or foul; the fact is, Trevanion" ("Jack Sprattly," murmured Norman. "With a great pair of false moustachios on him," urged Terry) "has been here, and promised to take us behind the scenes, and to come and sup with us at the Bull afterwards, and induce Coralie and the other girl to come too."

"Ay! and Coralie's a stunner and no mistake," observed Terry; "such a pair of black eyes, by Jove! They go through a fellow like—like ——"

"Bradawls," suggested Stradwick, complacently.

"A *pointed* illustration decidedly," resumed Terry; "but I was walking the day before yesterday with Old Beaugentil when we met this said Coralie, taking a constitutional for the benefit of her complexion; the moment Beaugentil set eyes upon her, he went off into an ecstasy, throwing up his arms and capering about like a bear on hot bricks. '*Mais, ce n'est pas possible!*' he exclaimed, 'vot shall I be'old? *Est ce toi Coralie?* Am it thou Coreliar, zie daughtaire of thy mama, zie beloafed *de ma première jeunesse! et quelle ange!*

vot an angle! *vrai ange du ciel,* a right angle of 'eaven! *Voyez donc, Monsieur Terrie; permettez que je vous presente, mon cher elève, Monsieur Terrie, jeune homme charment; mais n'est pas que Mademoiselle est jolie;* ees not Mees *superbe,* beautiful, *magnifique,* pretty vell!' and so the old boy ran on till I was in fits."

"What is your confounded difficulty, Norman," inquired Biggington, abruptly.

"Why, the window in the loft turns out to be too small for anything bigger than a boy to get through," was the reply.

Biggington muttered something unintelligible, which it would be the height of charity to consider a good word, as he continued—

"What do you mean to do then?"

"Put a small boy through it who shall open the back door into the school-room for us, whereby we shall enter and walk up to bed," returned Norman, stroking the raven down on his upper lip, where the "cavalry moustache" was just beginning to show itself.

"And what chance is there of finding a boy who you can trust to do such a thing?" asked Biggington gloomily.

"He is already found, or I am much mistaken," was the answer. "Moreover, properly handled, he'll do the thing well, and, *con amore*, I'd sooner work with *one* willing agent than with twenty forced ones."

"And his name?"

"The younger Colville."

Biggington mused—"He might do it; but his brother will not allow him," he said after a pause.

"His brother will have no voice in the matter, for he will know nothing about it," returned Norman: "but you shall judge for yourselves, for I have appointed the boy to come to me here. Only leave me to talk to him, and don't bully or frighten the little fellow, else you will defeat your own object. If, when you have seen him, you wish me to persevere with the plan, Biggington, stroke your chin thus."

As Norman raised his hand to indicate the appointed signal, a modest tap at the door was audible, and, on the bolt being withdrawn, Hugh made his appearance, and, at a sign from Norman, entered. The door was closed and fastened by Terry, who resumed his seat on the inverted wash-hand basin, with the air of a monarch ascending his

throne. Hugh bore the scrutiny to which all the plotters, Biggington in particular, subjected him, unflinchingly; he looked rather more grave and anxious than was his wont, but did not appear intimidated or abashed, though he stood in the awful presence of the cock of the school.

"Come here, Colville," began Norman; then, as the boy approached, he continued, fixing his piercing glance upon him, "have you mentioned what we were talking about this morning to anybody?"

"No, sir," was the unhesitating reply.

"Not to your brother, even? don't attempt to deceive me!"

"No indeed, sir, I would not tell a lie; if I had mentioned it to Percy, I'd say so at once," returned Hugh, colouring at his assertion being doubted.

"I believe you," replied Norman, glancing towards Biggington as he spoke to attract his attention. "I am sure you are a brave, honourable boy, who would neither tell a lie nor betray a secret, which is worse if anything."

At this commendation, Hugh's eyes sparkled, and a bright, honest smile lit up his innocent, childish face, which ought to have touched the hearts and disarmed the purpose of those who, for

their own selfish ends, were thus deliberately leading him into evil; it probably would have done so, were it not a well established fact in pathology, that, during the phase of public-schoolboy-hood, the human heart remains in a torpid or chrysalis state; the animal, at that period, consisting of a head, a stomach, and (fortunately for those who have the control of it, as well as for its future chance of developing into a reasonable mortal) a tail also. Not being actuated by any such tender feelings, or indeed by any feelings at all, except selfish ones, Biggington replied to Norman's look by stroking his chin. Stradwick stroked his at the same moment, giving involuntarily a slight shudder at the alarming future to which he was thus committing himself. Terry only grinned, which indeed was his invariable custom on all occasions, solemn or comic.

"As I am now convinced that you are trustworthy," resumed Norman, "I am going to tell you a secret; *the* secret, in fact, upon the safe keeping of which depends your going to the play."

"Or getting every bone in your skin broken," muttered Biggington in an aside, which was, however, sufficiently audible to convey to Hugh a

knowledge of the alternative which awaited him.

"Mr. Biggington, these other gentlemen, and myself," continued Norman, "mean to go to the theatre this evening, and if you will do exactly as we tell you, we will take you with us."

"But the Doctor!" exclaimed Hugh, aghast.

"That is the very point I was about to touch upon," rejoined Norman in no way discomposed: "the Doctor not approving of the younger boys being out at night, thought himself obliged to give a general order to the whole school; but at the same time, he contrived to have it hinted privately to *us*, that if the elder members of the sixth form chose to go, he should not make any inquiries about it, the only point he insisted on, being, that such an expedition must be managed privately, and without his being supposed to know anything about it. Now, in order to contrive this, we had thought of making our way in at night (we can easily get out unobserved after five o'clock school), through the window in the loft; but, as you say, and as I now remember, it is too small to render that possible, we want you to get through the sky-light into the school-room (as we were talking

about this morning), and unfasten the little door which opens into the playground; it is only secured by one bolt, which is not above your reach, so you can easily undo it. If you will undertake this, and promise faithfully not to breathe a word about it to anybody, you shall go with us to the play."

Poor Hugh was sorely puzzled; and his sense of right and wrong entirely confused; one idea, however, soon extricating itself from the chaos, he immediately gave it utterance. "The Doctor," he said, "will be angry with *me*, sir, though he may not be so with you, for I am only a little fellow, and a long way off the sixth form."

Norman hesitated; he knew that if they were discovered he should be quite unable to protect the child from punishment, and a sense of self-respect made him averse to pledge himself to anything which he could not perform.

Biggington was trammelled by no such scruples. "Never fear, young 'un," he said; "if the Doctor should by any chance speak to you on the subject, just refer him quietly to me; merely say,—Biggington desired me to go; Biggington will explain everything;—and you'll have no more trouble from the Doctor. Don't you think so, Stradwick?"

"Oh! certainly," was the reply: "refer him to Biggington by all means; say—Biggington desired me to go; Biggington will——"

"That will do," interrupted Terry, grinning. "Shut up, Slow-coach, we didn't *encore* the sentiment; moreover, I can perceive by the expression of our young friend's optics, that he is awake to a sense of his sitiwation. The play, a jolly good supper, and immortal honour and renown, on one hand; and an awful thrashing from Biggington, with a gentle refresher from myself appended, on the other; between such a Scylla and Charybdis he will hardly be inclined to forestall Jack Sprattly by singing 'How happy could I be with either.' So now, young 'un, favour us with your sentiments."

"If I might but tell Percy!" pleaded Hugh, glancing appealingly towards Norman.

That individual shook his head.

"If you do," he said, "you will have broken the trust reposed in you, and proved yourself a mean-spirited, cowardly child, quite unfit for the service we require of you, or the pleasure with which we propose to reward you;—tell your brother and you lose the play."

Poor Hugh! his better nature made one final struggle, but he had dallied with the temptation till it had obtained too firm a hold on his imagination to be shaken off, and so, like many folks older and wiser than himself, who have indulged in a reprehensible longing for some forbidden fruit till the appetite has grown too strong to be resisted, he fell.

"I *will* promise," he said. "I do so want to see the play, and you will take care of me if the Doctor is angry, Mr. Biggington?"

"Oh, decidedly; both myself and Stradwick," was the reply. "Stradwick and the Doctor are hand and glove just now, because Straddy's such a dab at Euripides."

This insinuation referred to the uncomfortable fact, that the head master had that morning informed Stradwick, in consequence of his total inability to construe the ancient Greek in question, that if after another week he did not perceive a very decided improvement, he should be under the disagreeable necessity of degrading him to the fifth form. Stradwick, therefore, hung his head sheepishly as he echoed—

"Oh yes, decidedly."

"We understand each other, then, and had better agree to meet here, prepared to start, at a quarter to six," observed Norman.

A general assent was given, and the conspirators separated. Norman glanced at his victim; there was a determined look in the boy's face, which gave assurance that he would go through with the task he had undertaken. Resolution was one of the few qualities Norman reverenced, and for a moment he repented the evil into which he was leading the child; but the two strongest passions of his nature, ambition and revenge, were linked with his scheme for that evening, and he could not relinquish it.

"Courage, little one," he said, laying his hand on Hugh's curly pate; "if you and I live, and as something here," and he touched his forehead as he spoke, "tells me will be the case, I achieve greatness, I will not forget this evening. Silence and courage!"

CHAPTER VIII.

NORMAN'S REVENGE.

When the devil suggests some pleasant but wrong scheme to frail humanity, his dupes generally find him a most amiable and efficient patron at the beginning of the enterprise, however he may leave them in the lurch when the fatal catastrophe approaches. To give that much-abused personage his due, on the occasion to which we are about to allude, he adhered to his word like the gentleman Shakespeare has declared him to be, for—as at seven o'clock the very small curtain of the very "minor" theatre at Tickletown drew up, and the limited orchestra, with a hoarse, eccentric, and *ad libitum* bass, left off playing—four distinguished-looking young gentlemen entered the stage box, and arranged the drapery in such manner that, themselves unseen, they might alike be able to

witness the performance, and criticise the house, which, in virtue of its being the fascinating Courtenay Trevanion's (*alias* Jack Sprattly's) benefit, was crowded by all the rank and fashion of Tickletown.

Any person who had very closely observed this same box, might have perceived peeping from under the corner of the red curtain nearest the stage, a little, eager, restless, excited face, watching with the deepest and most engrossing interest, every trifle that occurred, as though it presented some great and striking novelty. Had the looker-on been of a speculative turn of mind, he might have wondered why this little, bright face, which ought naturally to have expressed nothing but childish delight and surprise, should have had this expression marred by an anxious, scared look, which occasionally passed across the boy's intelligent features. To the reader, however, this evidence that Hugh Colville was feeling slightly ill-at-ease, even in the midst of his enjoyment, need present no mystery. But as the play proceeded, and Polly made her appearance, looking like a single angel, and singing like a whole covey of them, interest and delight overpowered conscience, and when

Jack Sprattly came on in jet black boots and moustachios, and bright red coat and cheeks, and swaggering about the stage as Macheath, and looking so divinely impudent, sang in a rich rollicking tenor, "How happy could I be with either," tol-de-rolling at the end with a devil-may-care joviality, which produced him three several encores, Hugh Colville's delight waxed to such a pitch that he mentally decided if the Doctor had suddenly appeared, armed with his stoutest cane, and then and there varied the performance by flogging him before the faces of the assembled audience, the exquisite pleasure he enjoyed would have been cheaply purchased at even that frightful cost.

Then followed a pantomime! Hugh's first pantomime!

Juvenile reader whose first pantomime is yet to come, mark my words, the words of one who speaks from experience; you look forward eagerly, no doubt, to the wonderful time when you shall be a grown-up man, and do as you please, which you firmly believe will involve always sitting up till three o'clock in the morning; riding a prancing horse all day; eating unlimited plum-pudding with-

out uncomfortable consequences; and having that very pretty little girl next door, with whom you danced, and, in your small unassuming way, flirted also, at the children's ball last Christmas, grown up into a beautiful wife for you, who will always do exactly what you wish her, and never go near Howell and James's at any price. You have heard poets and other licensed story-tellers rave about there being

> "Nothing half so sweet in life
> As love's young dream;"

or prate of the delights of ambition; the charms of fame; the pleasures of hope, and of memory; the satisfaction of a good conscience; or the inestimable blessings of domestic felicity—which, in a general way, means paying taxes and settling bills:—you may have heard all this, and believed much or little of it, as your bump of veneration happens to be largely developed, or otherwise. But, what I am going to tell you is a real "great fact," and do you remember it, and act upon it accordingly. The happiest time of your life ought to be, and probably therefore will be, the glorious night on which you, a light-hearted, merry child, witness your first pantomime!—and you may go with my compliments to Papa and inform him that I say so.

At all events, Hugh Colville felt strongly that until he had seen a clown he had been ignorant of the real dignity of human nature, or the sublime heights to which, properly cultivated, it was capable of soaring. Columbine also (as enacted by that houri, Juliettina Matilda Slammock) impressed him with a deep sense of the sylph-like grace and ethereal purity of woman, all but the very pink calves of her seraphic legs, in regard to which, beautiful and praiseworthy as they were, viewing them in the abstract as mere bounding, pirouetting, sliding, and gliding machines, he could not help indulging some scruples of conscience, mentally classing them with unpaid-for toffy, clandestine nine-pins on Sunday, and the few other examples of the "pleasant, but wrong" principle, which had come within the limits of his juvenile experience; and he was just considering that, if Heaven had vouchsafed to place him in the proud and enviable position of her elder brother, he should have mildly remonstrated against her making such a very prominent feature of her legs; when, to his surprise and regret, Virtue suddenly triumphed, and Vice being punished in the person of the Lurid Wizard of the Forty-locked Murderer's Cavern, who was

dragged by three supernumerary fiends to a naughty place under the stage, the curtain fell, and all was over.

The next phase of the evening was to Hugh one strange and uncomfortable scene of inexplicable confusion. Biggington, Norman, and his companions went behind the scenes, under the auspices of Jack Sprattly, who did not look nearly so brave and glorious out of his scarlet coat, and Hugh followed them for fear of being lost, receiving at their hands, much the same kind, and degree of attention, that a little dog would have met with.

Of all miserable, desolate, chaotic-looking places, the stage of a theatre in *dishabille*, is one of the most forlorn. The incomprehensible machinery for scene shifting, the frightful backs of all the brilliant effects, the dirt, the smell of the lamps, the ropes, the rubbish, the dangerous trap-doors, the tired, sleepy carpenters, the haggard snobbish actors, and, worse than all, the pale hollow-eyed actresses, with their forced heartless laughter—a very mockery of mirth—of all places for destroying illusion, commend me to the region behind the scenes as the most dismally effectual.

Biggington, Norman, and Stradwick, having disappeared somewhere within the mysterious precincts of the green-room, where they remained long enough for Terry to jump over everything, and tumble down everywhere, and set wrong bells ringing in all kinds of unexpected places, and have a terrific combat with nobody in virtue of a "property" sword and buckler wherewith he had illegally armed himself—the party reassembled, and without farther delay proceeded to "The Bull."

This respectable quadruped must have been, in his interesting life-time, a most rare and wonderful creature, at least, if he at all resembled his portrait, which hung creaking on a species of jovial gibbet in front of the hostelrie bearing his name. The picture certainly *may* have been a likeness, but as it represented the bovine original got up regardless of expense, in richly gilt hoofs and horns, with his tail twisted over his back in the shape of a horizontal figure of eight and ending in a bright golden flame, while such a cluster of Hyperion curls waved over his massive brow, as involuntarily to suggest the idea of his wearing one of those false fronts, paraded by self-deluding old ladies in the forlorn hope of deceiving society on the

score of their undesirable longevity, we can scarcely conceive the artist to have adhered to nature with a proper degree of pre-Raphaelite severity. Be this as it may, the present proprietor of the Bull had exerted all his energies to provide a supper commensurate with the dignity and gullibility of the givers of the feast; and Hugh Colville's eyes sparkled with delight, when the goodly array of nice things first met his gaze; for, though by no means greedy, he was still almost a child, and was a hungry school-boy into the bargain—need we say more?

Then arrived Courtenay Trevanion (*alias* Jack Sprattly) and the young ladies, who, from a strict sense of propriety, which was one of their marked characteristics, had refused to come unless they might be allowed to bring with them Mrs. Belvidera Fitz-Siddons as *chaperone.* This great lady, for such she was in every sense of the word, had done the heavy tragedy business for many years with immense *eclât,* until latterly she had grown too heavy even for that, which fact had been painfully impressed upon her by reason of her constantly, at harrowing moments of heart-rending despair, disappearing suddenly from before the streaming eyes

of the astonished audience, down traps calculated to support mortals of moderate (but not immoderate) weight. Finding that these unexpected disappearances tended to impart a burlesque character to her acting, rather than to increase the pathos thereof, Mrs. B. Fitz-Siddons had wisely restricted herself to such parts as suited her advanced years; and now, having, by the trifling addition of sixpence weekly to his salary, bribed the call-boy to chalk B. T. (beware traps!) upon all dangerous footing, she still shone in the elderly comic line, and played Mrs. Malaprop and Mrs. Backbite to delighted audiences. For the rest, this illustrious woman rojoiced in a pair of large, bold, uncomfortable, black eyes; a man's voice, slightly the worse for wear and —— and a little failing she had; stiff horse-hair-like curls, which might have been her own only that she had a harmless scruple against wasting money on paying her bills; and a general hooked outline, so essentially Israelitish, that her green-room cognomen of "Mother Moses" appeared by no means inappropriate. Of the young ladies we will only say that, like *all* young ladies, they were irresistible.

Just at first starting, matters appeared a little

dull and unpromising; the fact being that the two elder Tickletonians, not finding, when put to the test, that they were quite such thorough men of the world as they imagined themselves, suffered under an uncomfortable inability to make small talk; while Jack Sprattly, possessing a most inconvenient appetite, was so engrossed with the good cheer before him, that conversation, under the circumstances, became a physical impossibility.

As the supper progressed, however, and more especially when the champagne (which really was not bad for Tickletown) had made two or three rounds, affairs began to brighten. Mrs. Fitz-Siddons, unlike the voracious Macheath (which hungry highwayman still continued to demolish a supper more fitted for forty thieves than for one), was able to eat, drink, and talk at the same moment; and soon, by the cheerful, not to say jolly, style alike of the sentiments she expressed, and of the manner in which she expressed them, succeeded in placing the "young people," as she called them, upon a more friendly footing.

"Cora-lee, my love," she began (and be it observed, parenthetically, that this noble woman spoke with a slight Irish brogue—a philological

fact to be accounted for only by the hypothesis, which she herself had started on a particular occasion, when she was suffering from a temporary nervous affection which confused her speech and imparted a slight unsteadiness to her gait, viz., that her mother must have been an Irishman), "Cora-lee, my love! don't ye see Mr. Biggington waiting to take wine with ye; thank ye, sir, since you're so very pressing I'll not refuse; only up to my thumb, if you please, sir" (as she spoke, she, with delightful unconsciousness, ran her thumb up the glass as the wine advanced, until her digit and the champagne reached the brim simultaneously). "Your health, Mr. Norman, sir; O-phaliur, my darling, the same to you;—it's the cavalry you're going into, Mr. Norman, they do tell me, and its an ornament you'll be to the ridgemint—fine men they are, the Lancers. I'd a brother in them once; maybe you'll have heard tell of Major Fitz-Siddons? Six feet six did he stand in his stocking-soles, till he fell gloriously leading a forlorn hope at the siege of—of—bless the name of the place! now I can't for the life of me lay my tongue to it."

"Troy, perhaps," suggested Terry, politely.

"Belleisle, more likely," put in Jack Sprattly:

it was the first word he had uttered since they sat down, and he had a largish tartlet in his mouth as he spoke;—swallowing the morsel, he continued in a whisper to Biggington, next to whom he was seated,—

"The major was no major at all, but only a private, and was drummed out of the regiment for stealing the captain's shirts."

Having once found his tongue, which was not until he had more than satisfied even his uncompromising appetite, Jack proceeded to make use (we can scarcely in conscience say, good use) of it, to relate all sorts of anecdotes, theatrical and otherwise, of which the wit was so small as scarcely to deserve the name, while what ought to have been the moral was rather the reverse.

Then, quite by accident, another gentleman connected with the theatre called to speak to Mr. Sprattly, so of course he was invited to join them, and proved a great acquisition to the party, as it was generally reported of him that there was no subject, grave or gay, human or divine, on which he could not perpetrate a bad pun; and certainly on that evening he did his best, or, more correctly, his worst, to justify popular opinion. And thus a vast

amount of nonsense was talked, and many bottles of wine drunk, until Norman conceived that the time was ripe for the execution of his project.

It has before been intimated that the apparent friendship existing between Biggington and Norman was based upon a most false and hollow foundation, the truth being that the cock of the school, who was older than Norman, had, in times passed, availed himself of his superior strength, to bully, and impose insults and indignities upon, his junior, under which the proud spirit of the embryo lancer had chafed, until a deep thirst for revenge was excited, which he only waited a favourable opportunity to satisfy. During the previous year, a change had taken place in their relation to each other. Biggington having grown up, was, by the immutable laws of nature, prevented from growing any higher, while Norman, in obedience to the same laws, grew steadily after him until he also had attained the full stature of man; while, although of a slighter build, he had so strengthened his frame by athletic exercises, that he was now no contemptible antagonist even for the colossal Biggington. That the bully himself was aware of this fact, may be gathered from the extreme care with

which he avoided giving Norman an opportunity of picking a quarrel with him—a line of policy which, until the evening in question, had proved most successful.

Norman, although apparently enjoying himself to the utmost, and constantly hastening the circulation of the decanters, contrived to drink very little wine. Biggington, on the other hand, who was essentially animal in his tastes, indulged freely, until the effects became unmistakeably apparent in his flushed cheeks and rapid, thick utterance. During the earlier part of the evening, he had devoted his attentions to the amiable and accomplished Cordelia Ophelia Elphinstone (*alias* Betsey Slasher), as he found that young lady, who was of a singularly affable, not to say free and easy, disposition, least trouble to get on with; and Biggington hated trouble. But as Coralie's diffidence vanished before the influence of the champagne, and the polished compliments which Norman from time to time addressed to her not unwilling ears, she laughed and displayed her white teeth, and uttered piquant nothings in the prettiest broken English imaginable, till she appeared altogether so fascinating, that Biggington began to perccive

he had made a mistake, which the wine he drank rendered him determined at all hazards to remedy.

Norman, who watched him closely, remarking this, redoubled his attentions to Coralie, and Biggington's dissatisfaction and ill-temper became so unmistakeable that they were observed even by Mrs. Fitz-Siddons, whose troublesome nerves were again beginning to inconvenience her, as was evinced by a slight disposition towards the unromantic spasmodic affection popularly termed hiccoughs, accompanied by an inappropriate and involuntary wink, with which she punctuated (so to speak) her sentences. Feeling desirous that so agreeable an evening should end as harmoniously as it had begun, she tossed off a final bumper of claret (Mrs. Fitz-S. was great at claret), and, turning to the young ladies, began,—

"Cora-lee my love, O-phaliur my darling (wink), all that's bright, my dears, must (hiccough)—must (wink)—the fondest hearts must part; 'parting is such sweet sorrow,' you remember! Not another drop, I'm obleeged to ye, Mr. Biggington, sir—well, if you will (wink) I suppose I must (hiccough); we weaker vessels you know——"

"Hold as much as the strong ones," interposed

Jack, "and carry it off a precious sight better too, and no mistake," he added *sotto voce* to his punning friend, glancing towards Biggington as he spoke.

In the mean time, the young ladies, having risen, were looking for their bonnets and mantles. Terry, whose strong point was activity, had discovered Miss Ophelia's shawl, and with many grimaces as of a polite monkey, had placed it over her shoulders, and Norman was about to perform the same friendly office by Coralie, when Biggington sprang to his feet, and advancing with a slight unsteadiness in his gait, exclaimed in a hoarse, angry voice,

"Give me that shawl directly, Norman; *I* intend to escort Miss Coralie home."

"Excuse me," was the quiet reply, "having found the shawl, I shall not yield the privilege of placing it over the the fair owner's shoulders, to you or any one."

"Won't you, by ——?" returned Biggington, with an oath; "we'll soon see that!" and as he spoke he grasped the shawl with one hand, while he attempted to push Norman aside with the other.

Drawing back to avoid his grasp, Norman whispered to Terry, "Watch and see who strikes the

first blow, and then lock the door and put the key in your pocket."

Irritated at the tenacity with which Norman still retained his hold on the shawl, Biggington pressed angrily forward, when, by putting out his foot, Norman contrived to trip him up, while, by a slight push, he caused him to lose his balance, so that he reeled and would have fallen, had not Jack Spratly caught him just at the critical moment. Rendered furious by the laugh which followed his discomfiture, and losing sight of his habitual caution from the effects of the wine he had drunk, Biggington's savage nature blazed forth in its full ferocity, and, springing forward with a bound like that of some wild animal, he aimed a blow at Norman's head, which, if it had taken effect as it was intended, would have ended the struggle at once.

But Norman was prepared for such a salute, and dodging aside, received the blow on his shoulder, whence it glanced off innocuously; then, before his antagonist could recover his guard, he rushed in, and planted a well-directed hit on his face, in a direction which was certain to render him the proprietor of a black eye for the next week to come, at the very

least. Thereupon ensued a grand shindy. Terry, in obedience to Norman's directions, having recorded in the tablet of his memory the fact that Biggington had struck the first blow, hastened to lock the door and secrete the key; having accomplished these feats, he called out "A ring! a ring!" at the same time exhorting the combatants to take it sweetly and easily, and to fight fair, and like gentlemen of the sixth form.

The two girls, frightened out of their affectation, shrank into the farthest corner of the apartment, where they clung to each other in speechless terror. Mrs. Belvidera Fitz-Siddons, considerably flustered (no other word could express her exact state of mind so graphically), in trying to get out of the way, fell first over and finally upon a sofa, where, after making one or two abortive efforts to rise, she remained uttering incoherent ejaculations to which no one paid the slightest attention.

Jack Sprattly made a feeble and futile attempt to bring about are conciliation; but his friend—who, from being invariably cast as the benevolent uncle, or philanthrophic benefactor, in all the genteel comedies, had, by a not unnatural reaction, acquired a sanguinary and democratic habit of

mind, drew him back, muttering in a theatrical whisper:

"Let the serpent-brood of haughty aristocrats prey upon each other, Jack; there will be more room in the world for the honest sons of labour."

In the mean time, after a short but spirited rally, the combatants came to the ground together, when Terry picked up Norman and gave him a knee, while Stradwick, frightened out of his wits (the few he possessed), did the same by Biggington. Five or six rounds ensued, but as Norman, who was, to begin with, the most scientific pugilist, appeared perfectly cool and self-possessed, while Biggington was furious with rage, and excited and bewildered by the wine he had imbibed, each round terminated in Norman's favour; he having escaped any disfiguring blow, while his antagonist's countenance already showed marks of severe punishment. When the seventh round commenced, Norman again succeeding in planting a well-directed hit on the bridge of his adversary's nose, it became evident that the bully's temporary courage was failing him, and that one or two more rounds would completely exhaust it.

By this time, the landlord of the inn and his

myrmidons had been aroused by the noise, and were clamouring at the door demanding admission, but so effectually had Terry hidden the key, that Jack Sprattly, unable to find it, was reduced to shout to them to burst the door open. This, however, was more easily said than done, for the door was made of stout oak, and the fastenings were strong, and in good repair.

In the eighth round Biggington, rendered furious by pain, pressed so hard upon Norman that, in avoiding his blows, he entangled his foot in the carpet, and stumbled, while at the same moment a left-handed hit from his opponent catching him on the side of his head, brought him to the ground so violently that, when raised on his second's knee, he stared wildly about him, and scarcely appeared conscious where he was; — but a few moments served to restore him, and when time was called, he sprang to his feet with an expression of countenance which showed that he meant mischief.

Biggington, elated by his success, fought with more energy and spirit than he had shown in the last round or two, but in attempting to end the conflict by a tremendous hit, he over-reached himself, and Norman, seizing the opportunity,

drew back his arm, then, flinging it out from the shoulder, with the force and rapidity of a sledge hammer, caught his antagonist a crashing blow on the forehead, before which he went down like a shot, and when time was again called, he still remained stunned and insensible. At the same moment the fastenings of the door suddenly gave way, and the landlord and his wife, supported by the entire *dramatis personæ* of the establishment, appeared upon the scene of action in various attitudes of terror and amazement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCOVERY.

Ernest Carrington sat in the retirement of his little study and gave himself up to thought. His scholastic labours were over for the day, and with a head too tired for mental occupation, and a heart too full of the great problem of existence to find pleasure in frivolous amusements, he sat resting his aching brow upon his hand, pondering the mighty enigma of human life, in general, and his own individual experience of it, in particular. He thought of the aspirations of his boyhood, of the bright hopes of his later youth, and mentally compared them with the dark reality of his manhood; he called to mind the dreams of greatness which he had pictured to himself—not the false and hollow greatness of mere rank and

riches, but the true greatness of living to become a benefactor to his species; the greatness which he sought when he took upon him the duties, and privileges, and responsibilities of his sacred calling; greatness the praise whereof is uttered by the lips of widows and orphans, and written on broken and contrite hearts, to be transferred thence, by an angel's hand, to the Book of Life. And then, for he was young and loving-hearted, he thought of softer, brighter visions; of a fair ideal Being with an angel's brow, and a woman's form, who should pass by his side through life, and loving him more than all things else, save the GOD who gave them to each other, should meet him again, and be his reward in Heaven, where perfect bliss would be ensured by the certainty that they should part no more. And in what had these bright visions ended? A life of solitary drudgery. Even independence, the one thing that sweetens labour—the power of carrying out his own ideas of right and wrong—even that, by his subordinate position was denied to him. And why was all this? What wrong had he committed to deserve so severe a punishment? Why was he condemned to this mental prison-discipline, this alternation between psychological oakum-picking,

and solitary confinement? Nay, was not his present position the result of his own unselfishness and liberality? If he had not given up his patrimony for the benefit of his sisters, nor relinquished his claim upon the entailed property, he would have possessed a fair income, on which he could have lived comfortably until he should have met with some ecclesiastical preferment, the duties of which would have afforded him the opportunities he sought, of devoting himself to the good of others. If not permitted to exercise the talents committed to him to the glory of God, why was he born into this world at all? Poor Ernest! he had yet to learn that hardest of all lessons, to an eager energetic spirit: he had yet to acquire belief in the great truth, that,

——"they also serve
Who stand and wait!"

But his trial was more nearly ended than he was aware of: even as he sat there late into the night, pondering on the evils of his position, but perceiving no means of escaping from them, the very fact of his unaccustomed wakefulness, constituted the first link of the chain of events, which was to bring about his deliverance. Days afterwards,

this idea struck him, and taught him an useful lesson.

The great clock in the school-room had just proclaimed, for the benefit of the black-beetles, crickets, and mice then tenanting the apartment, the interesting fact that it was 2 A. M., and Ernest, weary and dispirited, had just determined to put himself and his troubles to bed, when he recollected that he had left some Greek exercises, which he had to look over before the school opened the next morning, lying on his desk in the school-room. Anxious not to disturb any one, he substituted a pair of soft slippers for his boots, and knowing exactly the spot in which he had left the papers, he determined to dispense with a candle. Feeling his way cautiously, he descended the stairs and reached the school-room without any contretemps —but here a difficulty arose, for some one had moved the papers. Recollecting he had some lucifers in his desk, he was preparing to light a taper which he kept there for the purpose of sealing letters, when a sound, as of footsteps in the play-ground, caught his ear:—he paused to listen;—the steps appeared to come nearer, till at length they approached the outer door;—from the

sound it was evident that there were two or three persons. When they reached the door, they paused and spoke to each other in a low whisper; then Ernest became aware, from the altered nature of the sounds, that some one was climbing into the loft over the stable: his first idea was, that they were common pilferers, intending to steal the Doctor's oats; but it occurred to him that there might be some communication between the loft and the dwelling-house, and that they were burglars attempting to effect an entrance; desirous of obtaining more certain knowledge before he gave any alarm, Ernest remained motionless, listening to the sounds without. Suddenly, a noise above him caused him to look up; as he did so, a small window in the sky-light was cautiously opened, and a boy's head and shoulders were thrust in;—seeing this, Ernest stooped down so as to become hidden by the rails of the desk. Having reconnoitred the apartment, and imagining it untenanted, the owner of the head and shoulders noiselessly drew in the rest of his small person; then, hanging by his hands, he allowed his legs to drop, till, with his feet, he was enabled to reach the doctor's desk, which was considerably

higher than any of the others; he next closed the window, and silently gliding down the slope of the desk, by aid of a high stool gained *terrâ firmâ*.

Ernest's first impulse was to collar him, but on second thoughts he determined to wait, and let the affair develope itself a little further. Having reached the ground, Hugh (for of course the reader has long since surmised that it was that misguided child) crept cautiously to the outer door, and withdrew the bolt; as he did so, Ernest noiselessly crossed the apartment, and when the door opened, collared the first person who attempted to enter. A short, but severe struggle ensued, which ended in Ernest's favour: finding himself foiled in his endeavours to free himself from the young tutor's grasp, Norman (for he it was) observed quietly—

"Let me go, Mr. Carrington, you have half strangled me: I shall not attempt to escape."

"I'll take good care of that," returned Ernest drily, releasing his grasp on his antagonist's throat, though he still retained his hold on his collar. "Oblige me by walking across the room," he continued: "I must take measures for securing your

companions in this nocturnal amusement, as well as yourself."

So saying he conducted Norman to the door of the school-room, which led to the interior of the house—this he locked—then, still retaining his hold on his prisoner's collar, he rang a bell which communicated with the Doctor's private apartments. In the mean time, perceiving farther concealment to be impossible, Biggington, leaning on Stradwick's arm, and Terry's shoulder, entered considerably the worse for wear, and flung himself doggedly on a bench. The sound of approaching footsteps soon broke the uncomfortable silence which followed the capture of Norman. Ernest unfastened the door, and Dr. Donkiestir, followed by a man servant with a lantern and a thick stick, hastily entered.

"Ha! Mr. Carrington! Norman! What is all this? What is all this?" he exclaimed, as his eye fell upon the two most prominent figures.

In a few words, Ernest explained his own share in the matter; then, setting Norman at liberty, he crossed his arms on his breast, and leaning against a high desk, left the Doctor to finish the adventure.

"In the first place, who have we here?" inquired the head master sternly. Receiving no answer, he took the lantern from the servant, and held it so that the light fell in turn on the faces of the different delinquents, remarking as he did so—"Norman! I believed you to have been too much of a gentleman to have been mixed up in an affair of this kind—you have disappointed me; go to your room, I shall speak to you to-morrow. Biggington! why what is the matter with him?" throwing the light of the lantern full upon his swollen and discoloured features, he continued—"Why you've been fighting, sir, and are partially intoxicated! Disgusting! you shall disgrace my school no longer. Stradwick! with Biggington, of course. At all events, I am glad to perceive you are sober—fighting is a vice I never suspected you of. Terry! have all the pains I have taken with you, led to no better result than this? but I suppose you choose to copy Norman, even in his faults! And lastly, who is this poor child you have suborned to aid you in your nefarious practices? The younger Colville! Your brother should have prevented this!"

Poor Hugh, his worst fears realized, had been

crouching close to Terry (the most good-natured of the party) in an agony of apprehension; but, at this insinuation, all his love for Percy, together with the innate sense of justice which was one of his best traits, rose up within him, and, at any cost, he hastened to repel it.

"Percy knew nothing of it; knows nothing yet," he said; "I have deceived him; and it will serve me right if you flog me to death, sir, but do not be angry with dear Percy;" and here a burst of tears choked his utterance.

The Doctor was as much affected as a schoolmaster can be.

"Poor child!" he replied; "do not be alarmed for your brother; if he is, as you state, ignorant of this business, he has nothing to fear. You may all," he added, raising his voice—"you may all depend upon my acting with the most strict and impartial justice: and now to your dormitories instantly. I shall investigate this affair most scrupulously to-morrow."

So saying, the Doctor withdrew, courteously but stiffly bowing to Ernest; leaving the man-servant, with the thick stick and the lantern, to see the delinquents safely to bed; where it is

but charitable to desire for them a good night; a consolation we can scarcely expect them to obtain, however much we may *wish they may get it!*

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIBUNAL OF JUSTICE.

It cannot be a pleasant thing to be going to be hanged!—however thoroughly you may be aware that you deserve it—however clearly you may perceive that it will be for the good of society, nay, possibly, looking beyond the present time, for your own good also; yet the stubborn fact must ever remain the same—it cannot be a pleasant thing to be going to be hanged!

Now, although as the law at present stands, they do not exactly hang refractory, or disobedient schoolboys, yet there is a process analogous thereunto, though milder in degree, termed flogging, to which such juvenile offenders are occasionally subjected; and this process it was which, as Hugh Colville sobbed forth his penitence and remorse on his brother's neck,

loomed large in the distance, and hung over him, and weighed upon him, and crushed him down into a very abject and desponding condition indeed. It was not not simply the pain (though that constituted a large and uncomfortable item in his depression) that frightened him, but the publicity, the exposure, the disgrace, were more than he could bear to contemplate;—while Percy, cut to the heart by his brother's misconduct, yet sympathizing with a bitter intensity in his dread of the probable consequences, could only comfort him with feeble hopes of commutation of punishment, which his reason belied.

Poor little Hugh! how deeply did he repent having yielded to the temptation; how bitterly did he reproach himself for having deceived Percy; what vows of amendment did he register, if only he should escape that dreaded flogging; and how pale did he turn, and how sick at heart with apprehension did he feel, when the bell rang for morning school, and he knew that before it broke up, his fate would be decided.

As the boys assembled in the great school-room, it was evident by their eager, excited faces, and by a general amount of subdued whispering, that the

news of the *escapade* of the previous night had transpired, and all eyes were fixed on Norman, Stradwick, and Terry (Biggington did not appear); even Hugh Colville came in for a degree of observation, which served still more to embarrass and distress him.

As the clock struck eight, the Doctor, followed by the other masters, entered; and the cloud that hung upon his brow was without the smallest vestige of a silver lining, and appeared so awful, and portentous, as to strike terror into the stoutest hearts. The moment prayers were ended, the head master rose and said, in a clear, stern voice :—

"Before school commences I have a painful duty to perform. Regardless of my express prohibition, certain scholars of the sixth form have ventured to break through the regulations of the school—which do not permit any of the boys to be out at night—and have been to the theatre, taking with them one of the younger boys, who, on their return, was put through a window, and made to unbolt the school-room door in order to admit them. How they employed their time after they quitted the theatre, I have yet to discover; but they did not return till two o'clock in the morning

—one of them in a disgraceful state of intoxication. As the whole school is aware of my orders, and the manner in which they have been disobeyed, I consider it salutary that they should also be witnesses of my method of dealing with the culprits, so as at once to vindicate my authority, and to mark my disapprobation of their rebellious and ungentlemanly conduct."

The Doctor then resumed his seat, and continued —"Let those whose names are mentioned, step forward—Biggington!"

There was a moment's breathless silence, and then, with trembling knees, downcast eyes, and guilty sheepish manner, Stradwick replied, that "Biggington was too ill to leave his bed."

"I am not surprised," was the reply. "Let Norman, Stradwick, Terry, and the younger Colville stand forward."

With a proud, haughty bearing, Norman advanced, and placed himself immediately in front of the head-master's desk. Crestfallen and sulky Stradwick shambled after him. A moment's delay took place ere Hugh could muster sufficient physical strength to tear himself from his brother's side: while Percy was near him, he felt

some degree of security: but Terry put his arm round him, and whispering, "Cheer up, young 'un, flogging's nothing when you're used to it, and I dare say the Doctor will let you off easy—never say die," half led, half carried him to the tribunal of justice.

"You are the eldest, Norman," observed the Doctor, fixing his stern glance upon him; "and I will therefore deal first with you—whatever faults you may possess, I have never known you tell me an untruth, and therefore I shall, for the satisfaction of myself and those around me, ask you one or two questions, which you are at liberty to answer or not, as you may prefer. In the first place, do you admit the truth of the accusation brought against you?"

"Yes, sir," was the quiet, self-possessed reply, in a tone neither disrespectful, nor penitent.

"Have you any objection to give me an account of the expedition, especially how you passed the evening after you quitted the theatre?" was the next inquiry.

Norman paused for a moment, in thought, ere he answered—"My only objection, Doctor Donkiestir, would be the possibility of betraying my

companions; but it appears to me, that as you saw and recognized us on our return, and are acquainted with the main facts of the case, the little I shall have to add, will tend rather to help than to injure them. For private reasons of my own, I proposed to Biggington to go to the theatre last night, and devised a scheme by which we might accomplish our purpose; but the loft window being too small to admit the passage of a man's body, I bribed little Colville to accompany us with a promise of taking him to the play, which he had missed the other morning, forbidding him to tell his brother lest he should prevent him. We slipped out after five o'clock school, Stradwick and Terry accompanying us, went to the theatre, and supped afterwards at a tavern with some of the actors and actresses; towards the end of the evening Biggington insulted and struck me, I returned the blow, and we fought: in the last round, a blow I gave him stunned him; and it was some little time before he recovered sufficiently to walk back: as soon as he was able to do so, we returned—of the rest you are yourself aware, sir."

When Norman had left off speaking, Doctor Donkiestir paused for a moment ere he replied:—

"Your account completely agrees with all the facts I have been able to acquire in regard to this disgraceful affair. You admit the truth of the accusation brought against you, and, by your own statement, confess that you were the originator of the scheme; you have also demeaned yourself so far as to quarrel with a youth in a state of partial intoxication, and, as it appears to me, availed yourself of his incapable condition to punish him most severely. It has always been a chief object with me, and one in which I have been in many instances most successful, to induce the elder scholars to set a good example to the younger ones; up to the present time I have been well satisfied with you upon this point, I am the more surprised and disappointed at your late gross misconduct. My duty is clear. No kind of subordination could be kept up in the school, if I were not to visit such an offence as that of which you have beenguilty, with the most severe punishment it is in my power to inflict; I have, therefore, resolved to expel you and Biggington. You may now resume your seat, and, when school is over, come to my study, where I shall acquaint you with the arrangements I propose to make for your imme-

diate departure. Stradwick, have you anything to say in your defence?"

Stradwick, thus appealed to, remained uneasily shifting from leg to leg, until at last he bleated forth, in a half-crying tone of voice,—

"If you please, sir, I went because Biggington went."

As the abject parasite uttered these words, a furtive smile went the round of the school, but the Doctor's face relaxed not a muscle as he said sternly,—

"I have long observed the weak and servile manner in which you have imitated the worst points in Biggington's character; I, therefore, cannot do better than afford you a practical lesson, how, by participating in his vices, you must also share in the punishment they entail. I, therefore, expel you also—sit down. Now, Terry, how came you to be of this party? Heedless and imprudent I have long known you to be, but disobedient I have never before found you."

For a moment Terry hung his head, and a tear glistened in his clear, blue eye; dashing it away, he raised his face to that of the Doctor, as he replied earnestly,—

"It was the fun and excitement of the thing tempted me, sir, and I never thought about how wrong it was, till it was too late for thinking to be of any use. I am most of all sorry to have disobeyed you, and forfeited your good opinion, and if you will but give me a chance of regaining it, I'll cheerfully bear any punishment you like to inflict."

The head-master paused ere he answered:—

"I will take you at your word; I shall not expel you, but degrade you to the lower school. On every holiday and half-holiday during this half-year, you will remain in, and employ your time in construing and learning by heart six hundred lines of Greek tragedy; and lastly, you are forbidden to contend for any of the prizes before the holidays. If it were not against my rule to administer corporal punishment to boys in the fifth and sixth forms, you would scarcely have escaped so easily. Resume your place, sir. Now, Hugh Colville, tell me the truth; did the elder boys force you to accompany them, or merely induce you to do so by promising to take you to the play?"

Poor Hugh! all eyes were turned upon him, as, hastily swallowing his tears, he replied—

"Biggington promised me a thrashing if I refused to go; but it was'nt that, sir; it was the play did it, sir: I did so want to see a play."

For a moment, a faint gleam of pity passed over the Doctor's face, but had vanished, ere he resumed:—

"I am sorry that I feel it impossible to look over this, your first offence;—you are so young a child that I believed and hoped you had scarcely been in a position to exercise your own free will in this instance—that, in fact, you had been merely a passive instrument in the hands of your elders; but this does not appear to have been the case—you evidently, being aware of my orders to the contrary, were persuaded to share in this expedition in order to witness a play, and you studiously concealed your intention from your brother, because, he being older and steadier than yourself, you feared he might interfere to prevent you from going, knowing well that he would disapprove of your so doing. I consider this so highly reprehensible, that, in justice, I am bound to punish you for it, and the only punishment likely to make much impression on one of your age and character, and to inspire you with a salutary dread of, and

respect for, properly constituted authority, is a flogging, which will be administered to you in private, as soon as morning-school breaks up."

Hugh, who had listened to the Doctor's address as if life or death hung upon his words, clasped his hands together in an agony of supplication as his worst fears became realized; the head-master, however, who had hurried over the latter part of his speech as though he had mistrusted in some degree his own resolution, turned hastily away, and began arranging the papers on his desk, and poor Hugh, finding all hope shut out from him, crept back to his brother's side, and burying his face on Percy's shoulder, gave way to a burst of passionate, but silent, weeping.

During the Doctor's address to Hugh, Norman, who during the whole of his own examination, and sentence, had appeared perfectly cool, self-possessed, and almost indifferent, began for the first time to evince symptoms of uneasiness:—when the decree for the flogging was promulgated, he unconsciously bit his lip and clenched and unclenched his hand convulsively; but when Hugh burst into tears, he rose and said in an eager, excited voice—

"I beg your pardon, Doctor Donkiestir, but

I believe, in fact I am certain, this poor child was assured that if the affair came to your knowledge, he should be protected from the effects of your displeasure."

"By those who, for their own selfish purposes, were leading him into evil, I presume?" inquired the Doctor. Norman making no reply, he continued: — "Did *you* tell this little fellow such an untruth — pledging yourself to that which you knew you were unable to perform?"

"If I did not actually say so, I allowed it to be said in my presence without contradicting it, which amounts to the same thing, sir," replied Norman, colouring.

"I am glad to see that you have sufficient right feeling left to be ashamed of your heartless and unmanly conduct," resumed the head-master; "and I can devise no more fitting punishment, than to show you by practical experience, how powerless you are to counteract the evil consequences of the wrong you have committed. Your appeal only confirms my decision in regard to little Colville."

Norman had hitherto succeeded beyond his expectations in his cleverly-devised scheme. His object had been to secure two points: first to wreak

his revenge on Biggington, by forcing him into a struggle, for which he had been for some weeks past privately training under the auspices of a retired pugilist, who kept a public-house in the neighbourhood; and, secondly, to be expelled for so doing, by which event he should be enabled to join the regiment to which he had been appointed, and upon which all his hopes and wishes were just now centred, four months sooner than he otherwise could have done. Accordingly, till Hugh Colville, for whom he had taken a decided liking, was sentenced to be flogged, Norman had been inwardly congratulating himself on his success; but the fact of being unable to protect this child, to whom he had by implication pledged himself, wounded his pride and self-respect to such a degree, that, as the Doctor had truly observed, no more effective punishment could have been devised for him.

In the meantime Percy had been working himself up into a dreadful state of mind. The reflection that Hugh, his lost father's darling, who had scarcely had a cross word spoken to him in his lifetime, and even since he had been at school (owing to his own watchfulness, and the rough good nature of their cousin Wilfred Goldsmith), had never received an

angry blow—the reflection that Hugh, his pet, everybody's pet, was going to be flogged, was more than he could bear with equanimity. What could be done to save him? He glanced inquiringly towards Wilfred, but that knowing young gentleman shook his head despondingly—the case was beyond his skill;—determined to risk a last appeal, he half rose from his seat, but the Doctor's quick glance detected the movement, and he said in a decided, but not an unkind, tone of voice—

"Sit down, Percy Colville; I am doing what is best for your brother's future interests, and my decision is irrevocable. I will not hear another word on this subject from anybody," he continued angrily, perceiving that Percy still seemed inclined to remonstrate.

Ernest Carrington's desk was so situated that he could not only see each movement of the two Colvilles, but could actually hear every word they spoke to each other; thus he became aware that, at the moment in which the Doctor addressed Percy, Hugh started, and made a manful effort to subdue his tears.

"Hush, Percy," he said, in a broken whisper, "hush, dear, he will be angry with *you*. I

dare say I can bear it; it's only the disgrace I'm thinking of, and that somebody may tell Mama of it, and make her unhappy, perhaps." And here, despite his efforts, a sob choked his utterance.

Ernest caught the import of the whisper, and at the same moment he became aware of a timid and appealing glance from Percy, which Hugh also observing, a new light broke in upon him; for the first time, believing equally in Ernest's will and power to assist him, a hope of deliverance suggested itself to him; and, with an expressive little face, in which every passing thought and emotion could be read as in an open book, he also fixed his large tearful eyes imploringly upon Ernest's countenance.

And Ernest—in his own private mind, he had all along considered the Doctor injudiciously severe in regard to Hugh—he had duly estimated the strength of the temptation, and the poor child's weakness—he had also perceived the depth and sincerity of Hugh's repentance, and now his promise to do his best to befriend the orphan boys, and the recollection of the fact that he had been the involuntary instrument of Hugh's detection,

recurred to him with a force that was irresistible, and springing from his seat, he said,—

"Doctor Donkiestir, I fear the petition I am about to urge may be opposed to the etiquette of the school, but I ask, as a personal favour, that Hugh Colville may not be flogged."

The Doctor's brow grew dark, but self-restraint in speech had long since become habitual to him.

"I believe," he said,—"I believe I have clearly signified my wish that no further attempt to influence me in Hugh Colville's favour should be made."

"I am aware of your prohibition, sir," returned Ernest, completely carried away by feeling, "but I have pledged myself to befriend these orphan boys, and I will not fly from my word; I therefore again ask, as a personal favour, that Hugh Colville shall be let off."

The Doctor's lips worked convulsively, but by a great exertion of self-control he a second time restrained himself from any outward expression of anger.

"I grant your request, Mr. Carrington," he said gravely, "your position as second master in this school necessitates my doing so. How far your

having urged it, proves you to be unfitted for that position, is a question which I have yet to consider. Hugh Colville, you may thank Mr. Carrington for your escape from a well-deserved flogging: I hope the narrowness of this escape may impress you for the future, and that, while under my tuition, you may never again merit so severe and disgraceful a punishment. And now let the sixth form come up to me in mathematics."

And so the scene ended. Ernest had redeemed his word, and saved Hugh from a flogging, but at what amount of personal sacrifice remained yet to be proved.

CHAPTER XI.

LOSS AND GAIN.

SIR Thomas Crawley paced up and down his handsome library, a prey to anxiety; much depended on the turn events might take over which he had no control, but which yet must exercise a great and lasting influence on his future career. A ministerial crisis was at hand, and the party to which Sir Thomas belonged, would either be turned out, or would retain their position reinforced by a coalition with some of their opponents, and thus become stronger than they had ever before felt themselves. If they went out, Sir Thomas was prepared, cleverly and respectably to rat, and come in again with the opposition; but if they remained in, he was equally prepared to adhere to

them with the most unshakeable fidelity, and to make himself as generally useful and agreeable as in him lay: either way he trusted to see his services rewarded by a baronetcy, and he was only waiting for this desirable consummation, to make an offer of his bad heart, and dirty hand, to the ugly younger daughter of a very aristocratic, disagreeable, old nobleman. If he succeeded in all this, he told himself he should have reached the height of his ambition, and mentally promised his conscience (for, reader, he had a conscience as well as you and I, though we, in our superior sanctity, regard it as a poor limp, damaged, washed-out piece of goods, and look down upon it accordingly, like two fine old English Pharisees as we are) to give up sneaking and shuffling, which he called tact and policy, and live virtuously ever after, as became a member of the aristocracy—thus fitting himself to proceed, *viâ* the family vault, to take possession of the Ashburn estates in another world, in regard to which, he was fain to own that his title at present was a little—just a very little—doubtful. What a bad man Sir Thomas was, to be sure! How lucky, dear reader, that you and I are so much better than he!

But Sir Thomas had two friends in the Ministry, Messrs. Tadpole, and Taper, (the Honourable Benjamin D'Israeli knows them, and has made notable mention of them in his tale of Coningsby,) whose views were exactly in accordance with his own, *i. e.*—to take the best possible care of their own interests, and (whenever that purpose could be best insured by their so doing) of each other's also; and Sir Thomas had that morning received the following note, marked "private and confidential," from his friend Tadpole :—

"DEAR SIR THOMAS,—I have just learned, from an *unmistakeable quarter*, that it is Lord ——'s (naming the Premier for the time being) intention to apply to you for your living of Ashburn, for the nephew of Mr.——, the colonial Bishop of Boreanigger. The coalition is still quite upon the cards, so it would scarcely be advisable to say 'no'; while, if they go out, which is more than probable, to say 'yes', would be certain to give offence where you would least wish to do so. I would, therefore, suggest that, if you have not already filled up the vacancy, it would be *most desirable* to do so, without delay,

and you will thus avoid the difficulty—*verbum sat.*

"I am, dear Sir Thomas, yours very faithfully,

"A. TADPOLE.

"P.S. You will kindly bear in mind that clerkship in the Woods and Forests; young Grig, Mrs. Tadpole's nephew, is a very promising lad, and in good hands might do credit to his patron."

Sir Thomas read and re-read the letter. How fortunate that Tadpole had ferreted out this information! but for that he might have been forced to commit himself irrevocably to the losing side—horrible idea! Yes, Tadpole was right: the living must be disposed of without an hour's delay: who should he give it to? It must be some one without political influence or connection, lest he should give offence to either party! At this moment, from one of those strange chances which occasionally appear to determine the whole destiny of a lifetime by the agency of a mere trifle, Sir Thomas knocked some papers off his desk, and as he stooped to pick them up, the card Ernest Carrington had sent in some weeks before, fell from among them. He raised it, and regarding it fixedly, as though he

were scrutinizing the person whose name it bore, muttered,—

"Young Carrington, he is in the Church—why should not he do? He might, of course, be had at a minute's notice;—£800 a year would be a fortune to him;—besides, there's policy in the thing—I find North-park (a farm of some five hundred acres) is in the entail; if he were to get scent of it, and could obtain access to the papers, he might claim it any day; his boyish, chivalrous scruples are sure to wear out; this would bind him to me by the tie of gratitude: he is just one of those hot-headed, romantic dispositions that are always absurdly grateful. Gad! I could not have hit on a fitter person; I'll write to him at once: I've got his direction, somewhere;"—as he spoke, he began tossing over papers and letters in search of the missing direction—"A very good thought," he continued: "I could see through that young fellow in a minute; he may be managed as easy as a child, if you only take advantage of his weak points. I like 'em of what they call a generous disposition; they show you their whole hand at starting: it's your close, crafty, quiet dogs that are the hardest to deal with. I shall make a point

with him that he gets every farthing out of that proud, haughty Mrs. Colville, and her conceited, stuck-up minx of a daughter; they've never liked me, I know: they'll be sorry for it some day."

Ernest Carrington, when he returned to his rooms after morning school, found two letters on his table. The first he opened was from Dr. Donkiestir, and ran as follows:—

"My dear Sir,—It is with considerable pain that I feel it my duty to urge upon you the propriety of resigning your position, as Mathematical and Classical Master, at the school of which I have the honour to be principal. As regards talent and acquirements, I have never before had so able an assistant, but there are other qualities necessary in the onerous position of second-master of such a school as that over which I have, since its establishment, presided, which are equally important. In these, the injudicious manner in which you this morning allowed, what I admit to have been an impulse of generous feeling, to hurry you into a breach of scholastic discipline, which a more hasty man than myself, might have construed into a personal insult, proves you to be utterly wanting. It is to

avoid the possibility of your again placing both yourself and me in such a false and difficult position, that I thus reluctantly press upon you the advisability of your immediate resignation. When a few more years shall have passed over your head, maturing your judgment, and tempering your impulsive disposition, I can conceive you would be eminently qualified for the responsible, yet interesting, office of an instructor to youth. In the mean time, I would advise your looking out for a curacy, or a situation as tutor to some young nobleman about to travel, and I shall have much pleasure in giving you unexceptionable testimonials, or in furthering your interest, to the extent of my power, in any other manner you may point out.—Awaiting your reply,

"I remain, dear Sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"HANNIBAL JOHN DONKIESTIR, D.D."

"So that is my reward for my philanthropy, is it?" was Ernest Carrington's mental comment as he finished perusing the Doctor's letter. "Well, I dare say I did wrong to interfere, but I should hate myself if I could have sat by and watched

the expression in that boy, Percy Colville's, beautiful face, or listened to that poor little child's heart-broken sobs, and not tried to help them—I am glad I've saved the little fellow at all events; no more teaching for me; I'd sooner go out as a missionary, and try to wash blackamore heathens into piebald Christians than that. Well, now for a curacy, hard labour, and genteel starvation on £80 a year; never mind, I shall be my own master at all events, and may do some good amongst the poor people; no drudgery can be worse than this horse-in-a-mill life I have been leading of late. A letter from Sir Thomas Crawley! What can he want of me? I've no more birthrights to give away for a mess of pottage;" and with such hard, but not unnatural, thoughts running in his brain, he broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"My dear young Kinsman,—Ever since I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and learning the very sensible views you hold on all topics, political and religious—views which agree so remarkably with my own—I have been turning in my mind how best I may assist you, and have come to the conclusion that

I cannot better discharge my duty as a patron of ecclesiastical preferment, than by offering you my living of Ashburn, now vacant. The parish contains from six hundred, to six hundred and fifty souls, and the living is worth eight hundred per annum, with a parsonage-house and glebe attached; you will thus be rendered independent of any pecuniary difficulties, and able to apply your mind entirely to that deeply interesting subject, the religious and social improvement of the labouring classes. I have only two provisos to make:—one is, that if you approve of the position I offer you, you will signify your acceptance of it by return of post (my reason for this I will explain satisfactorily when we meet). The other, that you promise to urge your claim upon the estate of the late incumbent for dilapidations in the house and glebe. I am sure you will agree with me, that the Church is bound, in this latitudinarian age, to protect her property; and I can bestow my living upon no one who will not give me a distinct pledge upon this point.

"I remain, my dear young kinsman,

"Your affectionate friend and relative,

"THOMAS CRAWLEY, K.C.B."

Poor Ernest! The revulsion of feeling was almost too much for him, and in his contrition for the hard thoughts he had entertained of Sir Thomas Crawley, he dashed off a hasty letter, full of generous feeling and overflowing with gratitude, in which he thankfully accepted the living, and pledged himself to see full justice done to the interests of the Church as embodied in the Ashburn Rectory dilapidations: he was sorry for it afterwards, when——but we must not anticipate!

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROSEBUD SKETCHES FROM MEMORY.

READER! dear reader! nay, on the chance of your being a young lady, and, therefore, necessarily charming, we will go the whole length of the adjective, and say at once, dear*est* reader! (of course, asking your pardon for the liberty, and feeling quite sure you are only too ready to grant it, because you are such an amiable sex);—dearest reader, don't you think—(by the way, how very becoming that new dodge of plaiting a pig-tail of your back hair, and twisting it round like a coronal over your front hair, is to you—it gives quite a Classical, Grecian, Etruscan, and all that sort of thing, style to your *contour*)—don't you think, dearest reader, that we have for much too long a time lost sight of, and practically ignored, and altogether cruelly and abominably

deserted, and neglected, the Rosebud of Ashburn? and she all the while, in the self-denial of her nature (a species of self-denial, by the way, which would be very generally practised and become exceedingly popular, if we were but sufficiently philanthropic to divulge the recipe), has been only growing prettier and more fatally fascinating every day.

Oh, that dangerous, irresistible, little Rosebud! There she sat, looking as demure as if she was n't always ready to smash any amount of hearts into the smallest possible pieces, on the shortest notice imaginable, toiling busily over an absurd little crochet purse, which she was manufacturing literally "by hook and by crook," against Mr. Selby's birthday, when she intended to present him with it "to keep all his sovereigns in"; though if he could have kept *all* his sovereigns in that pretty little folly, the said folly would very soon have had a sinecure, and poor Mr. Selby have been a ruined snob, instead of a prosperous one.

Now, we do not object to mention in confidence, though we should not wish it repeated, that the Rosebud, albeit a most dutiful and affectionate daughter, had, since the boys went to school, found her life very dull and monotonous, and was getting

decidedly "hard up" for excitement;—pleasurable excitement would, of course, have been her choice, but even a little mild persecution would not have come amiss, in this dearth of variety:—she had expected Sir Thomas Crawley would have given away the living, and some horrid interloper have arrived to turn them out of house and home ere this, but no; day after day passed by without producing even the ghost of an incident, and the unfortunate and victimized Rosebud was reduced to sit by herself and look pretty, without anyone to reap the benefit thereof. What a cruel situation for a vivacious Rosebud!

Mrs. Colville had been absent nearly an hour, and Emily, who stayed at home to get on with her crochet (for the next day was the eventful birthday, and she was alarmed lest her offering should not be ready in time), had been all by her small and pretty self, and had crochéd away so hard that she had crochéd herself into a headache;—perceiving this to be the case, she laid down her work and fell a thinking, and having nothing agreeable to reflect upon in the present, she began to "try back" till she had mentally jibbed as far as the day when she, and her friend Caroline, had been frightened by the footpad, and rescued by an interesting young

stranger, whom you and I, dearest reader, know to have been Ernest Carrington, although the Rosebud was still in ignorance of that fact. From sheer listlessness, and want of anything better to think about, Emily began speculating as to whom her deliverer could possibly have been, and whether, by any odd chance, she should ever meet him again, and if so, whether he would recollect her, or she him, when it occurred to her to try if she could remember his features well enough to sketch them. Emily had rather a talent for taking likenesses, so she provided herself with a pencil and a piece of paper, and drew away till she had produced, what an auctioneer would have termed, a "splendid portrait of a nice young man." Having accomplished this feat, she held up her performance to scrutinize it, drawing back her head and bending her slender neck from side to side, like some graceful bird, till she got the light to fall properly upon her sketch—"Yes, I think that is very like him," she said, "only it has'nt got quite his expression—there was something so calm and—spiritual I suppose it would be called, in his look; he was very handsome certainly; I wonder who he could be!" Resuming her pencil, she added two or three finishing touches,

then appended to it her initials, and the date, with the intention of adding it to a select gallery of portraits of remarkable ball-partners, and other heroes of her imagination, which reposed inviolate within the sacred precincts of her writing-desk; but, at this moment, the house-door opened and Mrs. Colville entered, so hastily that Emily had only time to thrust her portrait between the leaves of the nearest book, (which happened to be a volume of Blair's Sermons), ere her mother had joined her.

"Mama, you are tired," she said, as Mrs. Colville, hurriedly drawing off her gloves, seated herself on the sofa; observing her more attentively she continued, "You look pale, and——You are not ill? Has anything happened?"

Mrs. Colville smiled faintly. "I am not ill, darling," she said, "but—but—the new rector is appointed, and we must leave this house next week," and overcome by the idea of quitting the home where she had passed so many happy years with him who was no more, but whom she had loved, nay, *still* loved so well (for hers was one of those rare and true affections which only *begin* on earth), the widow burst into tears. In an instant, Emily

flew to her side, quietly removed her bonnet, and then, with the delicate instinct of a true woman's nature, feeling that her sympathy could best be shown by silent tenderness, she gently drew her mother's head towards her till it rested on her bosom, and suffered her to weep unrestrained. But Mrs. Colville, although on this occasion the suddenness of the shock had overcome her habitual self-control, was by no means a weak character, and she soon recovered herself.

"I did not mean to distress you thus, dearest," she said, "but the announcement was made to me so abruptly; Sir Thomas—I do not wish to speak against him—but he is not a man of any delicacy of feeling."

"He!" interrupted Emily, "he has no more feeling than the most obdurate old paving-stone that ever refused to be macadamized."

"He has certainly not shown much consideration towards us in our sorrow," returned the widow, "but I bear him no ill-will; he only exacts his legal rights, and I have no business to blame him because nature has not gifted him with delicate perceptions. But I was going to tell you: Mr. Selby received a note from him this morning, saying—

but here it is; Mr. Selby gave it me to show you."

As she spoke, Mrs. Colville placed the note in her daughter's hands. It ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—I have at length found a suitable person on whom to bestow the living of Ashburn. The new incumbent will read himself in on Sunday next. I presume, from the length of time which has elapsed since the late rector's decease, that his family have quitted the parsonage. Should this not be the case, will you apprize Mrs. Colville of my desire that she should do so with as little loss of time as possible. The gentleman to whom I have given the preferment, holds most strongly the same views as myself, as to the necessity of guarding against the deterioration of Church property, and has, at my suggestion, written to Mrs. Colville's solicitor, to announce his intention of claiming, to the utmost farthing, the sum due for dilapidations; which debt I depend upon you to see liquidated. You will oblige me by doing everything in your power to facilitate all arrangements the new rector may wish to make. I leave Ashburn early to-morrow for London; therefore shall be glad to see

you this evening, when I can explain my intentions more fully.

"I remain, dear sir,

"Yours, &c.,

"THOMAS CRAWLEY, K.C.B."

"What a cruel, heartless letter!" exclaimed Emily; "and this horrible new rector appears to be as unfeeling as his patron; but of course Sir Thomas has picked out some dreadful old creature like himself; he had better have given the living to dear tiresome Mr. Slowkopf than to this unpleasant man. But Mama, dearest, what is to become of us?"

"Mr. Selby advises my taking the cottage on the common," was the reply: "it will just hold us and the boys, and I do not wish to quit this neighbourhood, at least till Percy is old enough to leave school."

"Well, the plan has its advantages; it would break my heart to leave dear Caroline, certainly," rejoined the Rosebud, musing; "the worst feature in the case is this dreadful new rector—I've taken a thorough aversion to him already—it is so unpleasant to dislike one's clergyman! I know

he will be horrible, I've a presentiment about him, and my presentiments always come true."

And so the Rosebud chatted on, partly to make up for her long silence, and partly to divert her mother from the sad thoughts which she could see were still depressing her, till Sarah coming to lay the cloth for their frugal meal, she tripped off to get ready for dinner, quite forgetting a certain portrait she had sketched; and Mrs. Colville, being of a neat and orderly disposition, perceiving a stray volume of Blair's sermons lying about, put it, and all it contained, away in its proper place in the book-shelves.

Saturday came, and with it the new rector; he was to stay at Mr. Selby's till the rectory was ready for him. Despite her prejudices and presentiments, the Rosebud was decidedly curious to see him, and actually made a pretence to gather some flowers for the drawing-room (although they were to leave on Monday), in hopes that, hidden behind the great laurel, she might catch a glimpse of him in the act of arriving, Caroline having told her by what train he was to travel. But unfortunately, after waiting a quarter of an hour, she had just gone into the

house for the garden-scissars, when the railway fly drove past, and her utmost endeavours only enabled her to catch the retreating outline of — a black leather portmanteau. Before she went in, however, Mr. Slowkopf, who in his heavy way was always extremely gallant towards the Rosebud, made his appearance clad in his best suit of black (which was inferior to any other clergyman's worst), on his way to dine *chez* Selby, and be introduced to his new rector; and hearing from the young lady (who looked upon him in the light of a half-childish grandpapa, or thereabouts), that she wished to learn something of the appearance, manners, habits, customs, zoology, pathology, ethnology, and general statistics, of the illustrious stranger, he promised to look in for five minutes on his way home (being Saturday night he should come away very early), and report progress.

Of course Emily told her Mama of this arrangement, and of course Mrs. Colville smiled, and called her a silly little goose for not having patience to wait till to-morrow; adding that, for her own part, she was used to Mr. Slowkopf, and should be sorry to see any one else in his

place; and then with a sigh she quitted the room.

Ten o'clock came, and with it Mr. Slowkopf, who looked and felt rather peculiar, which might be accounted for by the fact that his usual beverage was spring water, but that, on the evening in question, he had been prevailed upon to drink two or three glasses of wine. Instead of creeping into the most lonely corner of the apartment, and finding something uncomfortable to sit upon, he advanced boldly into the room and saying cheerfully, "Well, you see, ladies, here I am," he drew an arm-chair exactly between Mrs. Colville and the fire, and seated himself thereupon, chuckling with the air of a man conscious of a good joke, but completely in the dark as to what might be the nature, or subject, thereof.

The Rosebud was so deeply affected (in what manner we leave our readers to guess) by this unaccountable behaviour, that she dared not trust herself to speak; so Mrs. Colville, seeing that the curate appeared likely to chuckle himself to sleep without making any further attempts at conversation, began—"Well, Mr. Slowkopf, are you never going to satisfy our curiosity?"

Thus adjured, that individual started, looked round in confusion, and then in some degree relapsing into his usual manner, only smiling vacantly all the time, he said,—

"Before I can comply with your request, my dear Madam, I must inquire to what particular subject the curiosity to which you allude especially applies?"

"Oh! Mr. Slowkopf, you're only trying to tease," exclaimed Emily, recovering her voice and her curiosity simultaneously. "Of course about the new rector: what 's he like? come, tell us—quick!"

"He 's like," replied the curate, pausing on each syllable, as if conversation were an electric telegraph office, and he had to pay extra for every additional word he uttered—"he 's very like—most other young clergymen."

"Then he *is* young?" continued Emily, interrogatively: "is he tall, gentlemanly, handsome?"

"He 's not, at least as far as I observed—but such things don't make much impression on me" ("I wonder what *does!*" was Emily's *sotto voce* comment)—"but I should say, he 's not what would be generally called—hard featured.

I only hope," he continued solemnly—"I only hope, that he may turn out to be sound: there was something I did'nt like about that Hock."

"Indeed!" returned Emily, looking very grave, with the exception of her eyes, which were laughing wickedly, "incipient spavin, perhaps."

For a moment Mr. Slowkopf gazed at her in sheer amazement; then a faint consciousness of her meaning gradually dawned upon him, and he replied,—

"Similarity of sound has not unnaturally misled you in regard to the import of my observation, Miss Emily: the Hock to which I alluded was not, as you conceive, the elbow-joint of a horse's hind-leg, but a choice sample of Rhenish wine, hospitably produced by Mr. Selby for our gratification; in regard to which Mr. Carrington was pleased to observe that it was not the only good thing that came from Germany—a remark which I conceived might refer to the German school of theology, whence, by logical progression, I was led to doubt the soundness of the new rector's doctrinal views."

And having delivered himself of this ponderous explanation, Mr. Slowkopf rose up as suddenly as if

he had been propelled by a spring, after the fashion of that much-enduring public character Jack-in-a box, and abruptly taking leave of the two ladies, broke his shins over a chair, and was gone.

"Why, Mama dear, what has come to the creature?" exclaimed Emily: "is he going entirely to take leave of the few senses wherewith nature has so scantily endowed him?"

"You're too pert to him, my love," was the reply; "he's a very excellent young man; and always drinking water at home, is naturally more elated by a glass or two of wine, than a less abstemious person would be."

"Oh! that is the secret, is it—the wretch! I shall send him some teetotal tracts to-morrow. I've got 'A Voice from the Pump,' and 'Cold Comfort for Christians' still left: they'll suit his case charmingly."

And so saying, the incorrigible Rosebud tripped off to bed, where straightway falling asleep, she dreamed, that being in church, and the new rector turning out to be a fine young piebald centaur, she clearly perceived, as he cantered up the pulpit stairs whisking a most unclerical switch tail, that he was decidedly spavined in the off hind-leg.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN "ELEGANT EXTRACT" FROM BLAIR'S SERMONS.

An unfortunate necessity existing to compress this our veracious history of "the fortunes of the Colville family," within the limits of one small volume, a great many incidents on which we would gladly expatiate, can merely be sketched in outline, while we must leave the reader's imagination to fill in the details.

Amongst these "fancy portraits" must be included the pretty face of our little heroine, characterized by the look of astonishment with which she recognized, in her new spiritual pastor, the handsome hero of the footpad adventure, together with the becoming blush consequent upon the discovery.

Another leaf of the sketch-book must be de-

voted to Percy and Hugh's first return for the holidays, and their delight in renewing their acquaintance with their kind friend and protector at Tickletown, together with the consequent intimacy which ensued between the cottage and the rectory.

The new incumbent soon won "golden opinions" from rich and poor. Sir Thomas Crawley, who had wriggled himself into the new ministry, and obtained the appointment of ambassador to the court of one of the German potentates—a position which he hoped would secure the baronetcy as a retiring pension—had a kind of superstitious notion that his success was a reward for the good action of appointing Ernest Carrington to the living of Ashburn, and in order still to propitiate the fickle goddess, he continued to heap favours upon his *protégé*, till worthy Mr. Selby, unaccustomed to such freaks of benevolence on the part of his patron, began to fear the air of Germany had produced some strange effect upon Sir Thomas's brain.

Mr. Slowkopf, too, had gradually arrived at the conviction that Mr. Carrington was "a most praiseworthy and remarkable young man," and once assured that he had no lingering affection for

modern Teutonic heresies, he yielded himself to the fascinations of his rector's manner and address, and became one of the most devoted of his admirers.

Faithful to his pledge, Ernest exacted every farthing of the dilapidations to which he had a legal claim; but then he took at a valuation Mrs. Colville's furniture and live stock (comprising Sampson the pony, an orthodox and superannuated cow, some fine old Protestant cocks and hens, the annual pig, and the perennial yard-dog, which latter individual always barked in the wrong place, *would* go to church whenever he could get loose, and cost rather more to feed than did his new master)—and trusting to the mistiness which usually obscures the female intellect in regard to business matters, contrived to pay a sum for these conveniences which made the dilapidations fall very lightly upon the widow's pocket.

Whether Mrs. Colville was more clear-sighted than he expected, or whether his kind interference to protect Hugh from punishment, of which she heard an account from Percy, had won her heart, certain it is that the dislike with which

the widow was prepared to view her lost husband's successor, soon changed to an almost maternal regard for the young man who so well performed the duties which Mr. Colville's death had left unfulfilled. The only person who appeared insensible to the merits of this general favourite, was the capricious little Rosebud; but she, very early in the session, seceded to the opposition benches, and constituted in her own graceful person a formidable minority of one.

Nearly two years had elapsed since our tale began, and Percy and Hugh were again at home for their Christmas holidays. The party, consisting of Mrs. Colville and Emily, the two boys, their cousin Wilfred, now promoted to tail coats and a stool in the paternal counting-house, and the rector and curate, who having *happened* to look in, had been asked to stay to tea, were gathered round the fire in the snug little drawing-room in the cottage. There had been a pause in the conversation, of which Mr. Slowkopf availed himself to address the Rosebud.

"It is a singular and remarkable fact, Miss Emily," he began in his usual deliberate manner: "it is a most singular and remarkable fact, that in-

timate as I have long had the privilege of being in this family, I never, until this morning, when Master Hugh obligingly gave me an account of the transaction, was aware of your having been alarmed by a footpad and providentially rescued by the benevolent interference of our excellent rector here:" and as he spoke he indicated Ernest by a flap of his larboard fin, with about as much grace as a seal might have displayed under similar circumstances.

"Ay, what was that?" inquired Wilfred Goldsmith, eagerly. "Tell us about it it, Shortshanks" (an elegant Tickletonian soubriquet for Hugh): "I like to hear of shindies."

Thus appealed to, Hugh, nothing loth, proceeded to give a full, true, and particular account of the adventure, which, as Ernest was aware that he must have derived his information originally from the Rosebud herself, he listened to with a quiet smile, more particularly when he heard himself described as a tall and graceful young man of singularly prepossessing appearance.

"Well, it was a plucky thing well done, and I give you credit for it, Mr. Carrington," was Wilfred's comment, as Hugh concluded.

"Really I 'm quite overpowered," returned Ernest, with an affectation of extreme humility: "my poor exertions were a great deal too humble to deserve an eulogium from Mr. Wilfred Goldsmith." Wilfred, who since we last heard of him had altered only by becoming in every respect rather more so, winced slightly, for he knew that Ernest was laughing at him;—lest any one else should make the same discovery, he hastened to divert attention by attacking his fair relative.

"You must have been finely astonished, Cousin Emily," he said, "when you recognized the interesting knight-errant peeping over the pulpit-cushion."

"Did you know him again directly, Emmy?" inquired Hugh.

"Of course she did," rejoined Wilfred. "Do you think she did not dream of the features of her gallant deliverer twice a week regularly for the next half-year, at least."

"Indeed, I did nothing of the kind, you absurd boy!" exclaimed the Rosebud, eagerly. "As well as I remember, I did happen to recognize Mr. Carrington, but I really wonder that I should have done so, for I was so dreadfully frightened on the

first occasion, that I could think of nothing but the horrible man who had attempted to take my purse;" and as the proud Puss uttered this slightly apochryphal statement, she gave her head a little pettish toss, which meant a great deal, and expressed its meaning unmistakeably—at least so thought Ernest Carrington; and the grave expression of his face became graver than ever.

"Talking of falling among thieves," began Mr. Slowkopf, addressing Ernest, "reminds me of the last time I met you."

"Complimentary, very," muttered Wilfred, *sotto voce.*

"We were then discussing the subject of white lies, as they are called," resumed Mr. Slowkopf; "now I have since recollected a passage in one of the sermons of that learned and excellent divine, Blair, which affords a curious commentary on what we were saying. I cannot remember his words, but you'll find it in the fourth sermon in the second volume."

"We have Blair's Sermons," remarked Mrs. Colville; "they are on the book-shelves by you, Mr. Carrington, if you wish to refer to the passage."

"The second volume, I think you said, Slowkopf?" inquired Ernest, taking down the book as he spoke;—receiving an affirmative grunt, the young clergyman turned his chair, so that the firelight fell strongly on the book, leaving his face in shadow, which circumstance prevented the fact from transpiring, that scarcely had he opened the volume when he gave a sudden start, then coloured violently, and then examined the page before him most carefully and minutely. Having completed his investigation, he turned over two or three leaves, and in his usual voice and manner, read aloud the paragraph to which the curate had referred.

In the mean time, Hugh, by dint of coaxing, had inveigled his mother into providing the materials for a bowl of snapdragon, wherein, to his great delight, Mr. Slowkopf was induced solemnly, heavily, and perseveringly, to burn his reverend fingers in fishing out almonds and raisins, which he invariably dropped, for Hugh to pick up and eat. Just when the fun was at the highest, and even Mrs. Colville joining heartily in the chorus of laughter, Ernest approached the Rosebud, with the volume still in his hand, and said quietly—

"Pray, Miss Colville, do you ever study Blair's Sermons?"

"Oh, I have read some of them," was the reply; "but why do you ask?—cannot you find what you expected?"

"On the contrary, I have found more than I expected," was the answer.

"Indeed! and what might that be?" returned the Rosebud, wholly unconscious of the dangerous ground upon which she was treading.

"Only, as Mr. Slowkopf judiciously observed, a very singular commentary on the subject we were discussing—white lies!" was the reply, and as he spoke, Ernest opened the volume he held in his hand, and disclosed to the eyes of the horrified Rosebud, a certain pencil-sketch, with its tell-tale date and initials, which possibly the reader may not have forgotten as entirely as the fair artist had done.

In an instant a crimson blush suffused her face and neck, and turning away her head, she struggled successfully against a strong inclination to burst into tears; recovering herself, she said hastily, and in a tone which indicated a mixture of wounded feeling and of anger—

"I consider you have insulted me, Mr. Carrington; it is most unkind—unworthy of you!"

What Ernest might have replied to this especially unpleasant address, can never be known, for at that moment, Mr. Slowkopf, in an agony of digital combustion, overturned the bowl of snap-dragon, and during the confusion which ensued, Emily contrived to leave the drawing-room unobserved.

For some reason or other, Ernest did not sleep very well that night; and the first thing next morning, he wrote a note, explanatory and apologetic, to the Rosebud, and having despatched it, sat down to finish his sermon, but got no farther than "dearly beloved," till the messenger returned. The answer contained his epistle unopened, and the following note:—

"Miss Colville presents her compliments to Mr. Carrington, and begs to say, that as any discussion of the occurrence of yesterday evening must be equally useless and painful, she has thought it most advisable to return his note unread. Miss Colville trusts Mr. Carrington will not allow this affair to influence his manner towards Mrs. Colville or the

boys, as such an interruption to an intimacy which is so agreeable and beneficial to them, would prove a source of deep and additional annoyance to her."

Ernest was very sorry for what he had done, but he saw this was not the fitting time to endeavour to repair the breach; so, being a sensible young man, he let the Rosebud have her own wilful way; and when the boys returned to school, informed Mrs. Colville he was going to prepare a volume of sermons for publication, which would occupy all his leisure hours; and that she must not think he meant to cut her, if his visits assumed the angelic property of being "few and far between;"—as he said this, he observed the Rosebud's eyes fixed upon him with a peculiar expression in them—could it be regret?

CHAPTER XIV.

CONTAINS MUCH DOCTOR'S STUFF, AND OTHER RUBBISH.

ERNEST was true to his word—all that spring and summer, he worked at his sermons, and his parish, like an ecclesiastical galley-slave, till the volume was finished, and all the people had become so good, that if it had not been for christenings, weddings, and funerals, they would scarcely have required the services of a clergyman at all. Indeed, carrying out the doctrine of self-denial logically, and to its fullest extent, we doubt whether a rector might not be regarded as a superfluous luxury, a kind of canonical pomp and vanity, and therefore a stumbling-block to be removed from the spiritual highway of that super-excellent community.

But writing sermons, and instilling pure and lofty

principles into the decidedly earthly minds of small shopkeepers and needy agricultural labourers, albeit a high and sacred calling, considered abstractedly and as a whole, is yet, taken in detail, a very trying vocation to a man possessing, in no common degree, a taste for intellectual pursuits, and a strong appreciation of refined society. Thus it came to pass that one fine morning (it was the 12th of August) Ernest, having written a report of a district meeting for the propagation of the Gospel in parts so very foreign that the propagators themselves would have been puzzled to find them on the map, leaned back in his chair and wondered how sundry college friends of his were getting on among the grouse; when a note in the Rosebud's handwriting was brought to him; with sparkling eyes, and a slight accession of colour to his pale cheeks, he read as follows:—

"DEAR MR. CARRINGTON,—Mama is very ill—how ill I do not know—and fear to learn. Mr. Pillanbill (do you consider him clever?) tells me not to be alarmed, which frightens me terribly. May I hope you will come to us—poor Mama is able

and anxious to see you, and you will tell me whether anything else can, or ought to be, done.

"Yours sincerely,

"EMILY COLVILLE."

Within ten minutes after the note had reached him, Ernest was at the cottage. Emily received him with a blush and a smile. "How kind and good of you to come so quickly!" she said. Tears trembled in her eyes. Ernest had never seen her look so pretty.

"How good of *you* to send for me," he replied: "I hope," he continued—"I hope it proves that I am forgiven?"

Emily hung her head—"If you please, we will never refer to that again," she said, entreatingly: "I was very proud and foolish, and behaved very ill; but you are wise enough to forgive, and kind enough to forget: is it not so?"

Ernest took her hand and pressed it warmly, nor was it immediately withdrawn.

Mrs. Colville was seriously ill; and having sat with her for some time, the rector obtained her permission to inquire whether Mr. Pillanbill would object to meet Dr. Twiggit, and learn if they agreed

in their view of the case, just to satisfy Miss Colville's natural anxiety.

Mr. Pillanbill graciously consented. Dr. Twiggit resided ten miles off, and had too good a practice near home to make it worth his while to poach upon his (P.'s) manor for the sake of a single outlying patient with a limited purse. So Dr. Twiggit was summoned and came; he was a little man with a large hooked nose, and an ornithological cast of countenance, as of a shrewd fowl. Having strutted and clapped his wings, and, so to speak, crowed over the apothecary and the Rosebud, and looked as if he would have liked uncommonly to fight Ernest for a handful of barley, he entered the sick-room, where first, with two little bright bead-like eyes, he looked clean through poor Mrs. Colville into the mattress and feather-bed; next he stretched out a claw to feel her pulse, then he pecked at her to make her put out her tongue, then he shook his feathers and crowed over *her*, and then he chased Pillanbill round and out of the room for the consultation, which ran thus:—

Twiggit.—"Clear case!"

Pillanbill.—"No mistake."

Twiggit.—"Hepatico-cerebreosistosis, first stage."

Pillanbill.—"Quite so."

Twiggit.—"What have you thrown in?"

Pillanbill hands prescription. *Hydrarg:*—mysterious cipher looking like a 3 with two heads—*Rhei: pulvo*:—another cipher worse than the first, &c., &c.

Twiggit reads—"Hum! yes, ha! good" (returns prescription), "can't be better—ar—I think that is all to day, ar—needn't send for me unless any symptoms of spiflicatio appear, and then it will be too late; keep the feet warm, head cool, nourishing slops, bland puddings, but you know—good morning."

So saying, the talented M.D., who was in himself a modern instance of the mythical relation existing between Esculapius and the cock, strutted out to his carriage a richer man by five guineas than he had been when he quitted that vehicle.

Mrs. Colville's was a very severe illness, and at one time her state was most critical; but, thanks to a patient and resigned spirit, and an excellent constitution, after three weeks of intense anxiety to those who watched over her, she began to show symptoms of amendment. From the day on which Ernest had received the Rosebud's sum-

mons, to the happy moment when doctors Twiggit and Pillanbill took their leave, he had shown the unceasing affection of a son towards Mrs. Colville, and of a brother towards Emily. Hour after hour had he attended the sick woman's bedside, reading to her, or conversing with her on those all important subjects, that, at such seasons, become invested with a deep and solemn interest, which in our happier moments they too often fail to excite in our weak and fallen natures. And as Emily sat by and heard the words of the inspired volume, rendered yet more beautiful and impressive by the correct taste, true feeling, and rich mellow voice of the reader, or listened as, with a wisdom beyond his years, a wisdom not of this world, Ernest explained away difficulties, and threw the clear light of a strong and vigorous understanding on the great truths of our Holy Religion, what wonder if some of the reverence and affection which such teaching must excite in every pure and gentle bosom, grew to cling around the teacher. Or what wonder, either, that when Ernest saw the scornful, capricious, half-child-like little coquette, whose sparkling beauty had charmed his fancy, change, the instant sorrow laid its chastening touch upon her brow,

into the thoughtful, tender, devoted woman, the ministering angel beside the couch of sickness, whose gentle, never-failing tact, and quiet power of steadfast patient endurance, man's stronger, more energetic nature, may envy, but can never attain to;—what wonder if, where he had before admired, he now grew to love.

It is a good thing to love! So much mawkish sentimentality, and bombastic nonsense—so many white-muslined tears, and boarding-school sentimentalities, have been heaped around its counterfeit, that healthy minds not unnaturally scoff at the passion—until they feel it; and thus has one of the highest emotions of which our nature is capable, been brought into undeserved disrepute. A deep, true, earnest, unselfish affection, such as an honest man ("the NOBLEST work of God") is capable of feeling for a woman worthy to call it forth, raises, purifies, and spiritualizes his whole being, enlarges his sympathies, and (by affording a new motive for exertion) stimulates his faculties, and thus causes him to do the work he may lay his hand to, better than he would have executed it without such an incentive. The Apostle tells us, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," and

a great truth is embodied in the text: a nature capable of forming a deep unselfish attachment to one of God's creatures, raises its possessor in the scale of creation, and enables him to adore his Maker and love his fellows, with a zealous earnestness and reality, of which a self-engrossed character is incapable—therefore, as we began by saying,—it is a good thing to love!

As Mrs. Colville's recovery progressed, it was Ernest Carrington who drew her about in her garden-chair, and as she grew yet stronger, it was on his arm she leaned when, with feeble steps, she began once again to resume her daily walks; and as, with grateful heart, Emily watched the colour slowly returning to her mother's pale cheeks, she almost felt as if it was to Ernest that she owed her beloved parent's restoration.

One morning, about a month after Mr. Pillanbill had finally taken leave, and when every vestige of his first syllable had been swallowed, and his last syllable (which was a very long one) had been paid, Ernest, whilst waiting until Mrs. Colville was ready for her accustomed walk, had a letter with a foreign postmark put into his hand. Emily, who watched him while he read it, saw him start and change colour.

"Is anything the matter?" she inquired, as he refolded the letter.

"Yes — no — that is, I think you cannot any longer be anxious about Mrs. Colville: her health, thank God, is perfectly restored?"

"Oh yes, I trust so," was the reply, "but why do you ask?"

"Because I must leave you for a time, and if you felt nervous or uncomfortable about your mother, we could arrange for Percy to return a week or two before the holidays—what do you say?—he might be a comfort to you?"

As Ernest spoke, he stooped to pick up the envelope of the letter, and thus failed to observe that Emily started and turned pale when he said he must leave her: the letter was from Sir Thomas Crawley's valet; his master was very ill—dangerously ill he was afraid; he had been unwell for some time, and had gone to Baden for change of air; but instead of recovering, he had grown worse every day, until finally, after a long interview with his medical advisers, he desired Hemmings to write to Mr. Selby and Mr. Carrington, begging them to come out to him without delay, and bring with them some clever English physician. When

Mrs. Colville appeared and learned this intelligence, she fully agreed with Ernest that no time should be lost in setting off, and after a few minutes' conversation on the subject, the rector rose to take his leave, saying that he should probably start the next morning.

"Mama has persuaded me to go for an hour or two to the Selbys' this evening; Caroline would take no refusal, and Miss Plainfille is coming to sit with Mama. Shall I see you there?" asked the Rosebud quietly.

"Well then, farewell dear Mrs. Colville," exclaimed Ernest warmly, having answered Emily's question in the affirmative; "I leave you in very good hands, and expect to find you stronger than ever when I return."

The evening at the Selbys' was a very pleasant one, both to Emily and to Ernest, only instead of two hours, it appeared to last about ten minutes.

"Mr. Carrington, I'm afraid I must be rude enough to ask you to step into my office and look at the arrangements I have made for our journey to-morrow," observed Mr. Selby late in the evening.

"Certainly, I will follow you in one moment," was the reply.

There was a small apartment opening out of the drawing-room, fitted up as a boudoir for the benefit of Caroline Selby. In this snuggery the two young ladies had been looking over some water-colour sketches, but Caroline Selby had just been called away, and the Rosebud was left by herself. At that instant Ernest joined her.

"Emily," he said, and his voice was low and tremulous—"Emily, I have come to bid you good-by."

"Must you go already?" was the rejoinder.

"Indeed, I fear so," returned Ernest. There was a pause, and then he resumed, in a voice which trembled with emotion, "Emily, we have been very happy of late."

"Oh, yes!" she murmured, almost unconsciously.

"And you," he continued—"you have been very kind and gentle. Emily, you will not forget me—will not grow cold towards me again?"

She made no reply, but her silence was more eloquent than words. At that moment Mr. Selby's footstep sounded on the stairs.

"I *must* go," Ernest resumed: "Emily, dear Emily! good-by;—God bless you!" He took her

soft, warm, little hand in his own; she allowed him to retain it unresistingly; he pressed it, and his heart beat quickly when he felt the pressure faintly but unmistakably returned. With a sudden impulse, he raised the little hand still imprisoned in his to his lips, kissed it, and tore himself away. As he paused to close the door, a slight sound caught his ear: could be it a sob?

How long it might have been after his departure ere the noise of approaching voices roused Emily from the mental abstraction into which she had fallen, that young lady herself never knew — it might have been one minute, it might have been ten. When she did awake to a sense of outward things, the following speech from the lips of Mrs. Selby, a good-natured, vulgar woman, arrested her attention:—

"And so, ma'am, if Sir Thomas Crawley dies, which my husband fears is only too probable, Mr. Carrington is as likely to be his heir as anybody I can think of."

"And then he'll go and marry that pert, stuck-up Emily Colville, I suppose" (the speaker was Mrs. Pillanbill, who owned three awful daughters, unattached); "that girl's played her cards well, and

no mistake. It was easy to see she set her cap at him from the first—probably calculated on his being Sir Thomas's heir all along. Oh, she's a deep one, trust her!"

And as the speakers passed on, their words became inaudible in the distance; but Emily had heard too much for her peace of mind. All night long she lay awake weeping—for she resolved, if Ernest should be Sir Thomas's heir, and asked her to become his wife, she must and would refuse him, if the resolution broke her heart.

Oh, Rosebud! Rosebud! beware of pride—the sin that peopled Hell!

CHAPTER XV.

SETTLES THREE OF THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sir Thomas Crawley had sneaked and shuffled through life, and by doing so with a degree of talent which, if exerted in a righteous cause, might have gained him the love and respect of good men, had obtained the world's prizes, riches and rank. But tact and cleverness, rank and riches, were equally useless to him now, for he had met with an opponent whom he could neither bribe, nor cheat, nor intimidate, nor cajole. Face to face with death, all his worldly wisdom failed him. Dying! he could not believe it—so much yet remained for him to do. If he could but live for two months longer he should be a baronet—for two years, and he might have married the proud peer's daughter,

and transmitted the rank and honours he had won to a long line of descendants. Then, indeed, then, when he had accomplished something, then the idea of death might not have appeared so monstrous, so impossible. But even then he should have required a little time to prepare for death. Poor, self-deceived fool! as if every hour you have lived, every word you have spoken—ay, and every thought you have thought, were not preparing you for death, and for eternity. It is not what you have achieved, that will help you now; it is what you have been—what you are! The meek and lowly of heart will compose the aristocracy of Heaven; and the lame, and the halt, and the blind, who have borne their cross patiently, shall be its mighty ones: he who best has loved God and his neighbour—he whose life has been one unconscious preparation for death—he shall reap the reward;—else is Heaven but a mockery, and death—the "long dark day of nothingness"—the sceptic's idea of death,—extinction, annihilation, is the only reality.

Sir Thomas Crawley was dying; he knew it before Ernest Carrington brought the English physician; he knew it when the physician's eye first met his own; he knew it when Mr. Selby urged him to

sign his will. But he could not, he would not believe it. He was weak, he said; Germany did not agree with him; he had worked too hard, and required rest and society: that was his reason for summoning Mr. Carrington. Had Selby brought the papers he required?—old Sir Ralph Carrington's will?—good! and his own will?—good! Let that be destroyed now, before his eyes—good!—he should make a fresh one—when he reached Ashburn Priory! But he did not do so, for the very good reason that men in their coffins cannot make wills, and Sir Thomas reached Ashburn a corpse, and took up his abode in the family vault, handsomely bound in mahogany and black velvet, ornamented with a real silver plate, whereupon were engraved a goodly list of virtues, of which nobody had suspected him when living, but of which the undertaker always kept a large ready-made supply on hand, for the benefit of such of his customers as were rich enough to afford them. Nothing was said about his vices perhaps because the silver plate was not half long enough to contain them.

Dear reader, shall you like to have a silver plate? For myself, a little one of Britannia

metal, with "*Peccavi*" engraved upon it, will suit me well enough; but then I am only a poor author, and if any of my works should happen to survive me in morocco covers, I shall care little what sort of boards the hand that traced them lies bound in.

During the time Ernest was in Germany, the Rosebud was decidedly out of spirits, restless, and anxious; and when the news of Sir Thomas Crawley's death arrived, she became so nervous and dejected, that Mrs. Colville grew quite uneasy about her.

One fine morning Mrs. Selby paid them a visit, evidently full of news. It soon came out,—she had heard from Mr. Selby; he and Mr. Carrington would be home the next day; and—would Mrs. Colville believe it?—poor dear Sir Thomas had died without signing his last will and testament; so all the property would go, under a former one, to his heir, Mr. Peter Crawley, a very fine young man, in a large way of business in Manchester, though of course he'd give up all that sort of thing now. She, Mrs. Selby, was only sorry on one account:—she had never been able to get it out of Mr. Selby, he was so ridiculously close, but she was almost certain Sir Thomas had

left £20,000 to Mr. Carrington in his last will, and he would have spent the money so well, it certainly was a thousand pities; but Mr. Peter Crawley would benefit, and he was such a very fine young man; a fortunate family the Crawleys were, certainly.

That day at dinner, Mrs. Colville remarked her daughter's appetite was returning, and that she began to look like herself again; which she attributed to a certain quinine mixture wherewith the Rosebud had been victimized, and which she canonized accordingly.

Ernest and Mr. Selby arrived when due, and the legend of Mr. Peter Crawley's heirship remained uncontradicted—nay, was confirmed by that very fine young man's arrival, in high health and spirits, to enact the part of chief mourner. Ernest was much occupied by parish affairs, and by the arrangements for the approaching funeral (in regard to which, Mr. Selby appeared resolved to consult him much more than he wished, or Mr. Peter Crawley seemed to relish); but all his leisure moments he spent at the cottage, and had no reason to complain of the reception he met with from either mother or daughter.

And so, in due course of time, the day for the funeral arrived. Now, it is an acknowledged fact, that funerals and weddings are the two dullest and most sombre occasions on which human creatures assemble themselves together, and are therefore equally insipid to describe; only a funeral labours under the additional disadvantage, that it is against every rule of good taste and right feeling to poke fun at it. We feel, therefore, that we have "our public" with us, when, without entering into detail, we beg them to consider Sir Thomas Crawley handsomely and appropriately interred; with the necessary amount of black crape, crocodile tears, and funereal foppery.

After the ceremony was over, Mr. Selby ate an excellent luncheon at the expense of the estate, to provide against the possible contingency of requiring the performance repeated on his own account, after a verdict of "died of inanition," and then prepared to read the will—only, after searching high and low, and in every intermediate altitude, no will was forthcoming, so the next best thing was to inform a small and select coterie of ravening wolves, and daughters of the horse-leech, there met together in bombazine and black sheep's-

clothing (*alias* broadcloth), and styling themselves relations of the dear departed (which, in more senses than one, they certainly were), all that he (Selby) knew about the matter. This was; that since his accession to the Manor of Ashburn, Sir Thomas Crawley had made two wills;—the first, bequeathing the bulk of the property to Mr. Peter Crawley, he had duly signed, sealed, and delivered; the second he had never completed. That, when Sir Thomas, in his last illness, summoned Mr. Selby to Baden, he had desired him to bring with him three documents, viz., old Sir Ralph Carrington's will, under which he had originally inherited the property; his own completed will; and the draught of the more recent one, then incomplete. That Sir Thomas had carefully perused every clause of Sir Ralph's will; then, begging Mr. Selby to take especial care of it, he desired him to destroy both the others in his presence; adding, that they neither of them carried out his present intentions, and that, on his return to the Priory, he should give instructions for a fresh one. That he (Mr. Selby) declining to destroy the wills without witnesses of his doing so, by Sir Thomas Crawley's express desire, the valet and the English physician were summoned,

and in their presence he burned the wills. The property must, therefore, be disposed of according to the will of the late Sir Ralph Carrington.

We will save the reader (and ourselves) the trouble of wading through the mire of that most senseless abuse of the Queen's English, and her subjects' common sense, yclept "legal phraseology," which ought to be rendered illegal without delay; and proceed at once to state, that, in the event of plain Thomas Crawley (not then be-knighted) dying intestate and without issue, the property was to revert to the eldest son of Reginald Carrington, &c., &c., who, as the reader may probably conjecture, was the "cut off" son of Sir Hugh, and the father of the present rector of Ashburn.

Ernest Carrington, therefore, the *ci-devant* mathematical and classical master of Dr. Donkiestir's school at Tickletown, was now lord of the manor of Ashburn, patron of his own living, and owner of Ashburn Priory, besides, if he chose to revive the dormant title, a baronet also.

On hearing this announcement, that fine young man Mr. Peter Crawley, said a naughty word, and then tried to look as if somebody else had done it, frowning portentously at the oldest ravening wolf,

who, with the rest of the pack, appeared eager to turn and rend somebody, and were only restrained from an outbreak of ferocity by the tightness of their (black) sheep's clothing; while the Misses Horse-leech, despite their bombazine and flounces, cast sanguinary glances on Mr. Selby, and would probably there and then have fixed upon him, and exhausted his vital fluid, albeit his personal appearance was scarcely suggestive of an agreeable esculent, but for the presence of the bystanders.

The Rosebud heard the news before she slept that night—slept, did we say?—poor little self-tortured victim to a delusion of the arch-enemy—if agonized sobs, threatening to part soul and body; if pale cheeks, throbbing bosom, streaming eyes, and burning brow, be signs of sleep, then indeed was the expression rightly chosen. Ernest also, either by some strange vibration of the sympathetic chain which unites those who truly love—(my dear strong-minded old gentleman, albeit you are the "father of a family," and a fair specimen of the ancient Turk of private life into the bargain, your saying "Pish! folly! German rubbish!" does not affect me in the slightest degree, probably because the sympathetic link which so much offends you, does

not unite our spirits, which will, I fear, always more or less effervesce rather than mingle, by being brought in contact with one another)—Ernest also, either from some sympathetic influence, or from the natural impetuosity of his disposition, was so restless and excited that night, that he determined the next day should decide whether he was to be more happy, or more miserable, than anybody had ever been before—except, perhaps, the *few* other ardent young men who have "lived and loved," and got into desperate states of mind about it, since the days when Noah went a-yachting.

Accordingly, knowing that Mrs. Colville had usually breakfasted in her own room since her illness, and seldom made her appearance in the drawing-room till about twelve o'clock, Ernest (as soon as he had finished his breakfast, and written two or three business letters, which were fertile in mistakes and erasures, seeing that his hand had written them while his mind was "far away,") walked down to the cottage, let himself in, and without announcement made his way into the drawing-room, as he had often done before, where, opening the door, he found, as he had fondly hoped to do, the Rosebud "blooming alone;" only that she was not blooming

at all, but looking especially pale and washed out, by reason of the tempestuous night she had passed. Not but that the storm of feeling which had swept over her maiden soul, and left its traces behind, had added a depth and (if we may the use the term) pathos to her beauty, which it wanted previously. She turned, if possible, still more pale as he entered; then, by a strong exercise of self-control, she strove, with tolerable success, to receive him in her usual manner. After a few commonplace inquiries and responses had passed between them, Emily, by a great effort, felicitated him on his accession of fortune. He smiled mournfully.

"Do not congratulate me, Emily," he said: "it is a vast and fearful responsibility. My career would have been a simpler and happier one without it, but it is God's will to call me to a more prominent position, and I will not shrink from the cares and duties it will impose upon me." He paused, then with a forced smile, which most ineffectually concealed his agitation, continued, "I should make but a poor advocate I fear; for here am I setting forth all the evils and difficulties of my new position, when my object in coming here—an object in the attainment of which the whole happiness of my

existence is centred—is to ask you to share it." He then in a few simple, truthful, and therefore eloquent words, told her of his deep affection for her, and of his earnest desire to do what mortal might, to guard her from, or to mitigate, all the sorrows which more or less fall to the lot of each of us, confident that, in striving to provide for her happiness, he should insure his own.

Emily heard him to the end without interruption, and, save that she grew paler, and that her features assumed a more fixed and immovable expression, she evinced no sign of being in the slightest degree affected by his appeal. When he had concluded, she thanked him for the compliment he had paid her, but informed him that, although she should always regard him in the light of a dear and valued friend, and hoped he would not deprive her of a privilege she so highly appreciated, yet that she could never become anything more to him than a friend—in fact, she decidedly and unequivocally refused him.

Ernest was thunderstricken! He was no coxcomb, but neither was he devoid of penetration; and he knew her so well—had traced, as he believed, so clearly the rise and progress of her affection for

him—an affection ripened, and as it were, sanctified, by their joint attendance beside her mother's sick bed—that, although from a slight tendency to waywardness which he was aware lurked in her disposition, he anticipated some little difficulty in obtaining her consent to their union, yet the idea that his offer should be met with a calm and deliberate refusal, had never occurred to him as even a possibility. After a minute's pause, he exclaimed,—

"I am grieved, — pained beyond expression!—nay," he continued, gaining courage from the strength of his convictions, "I will even add, surprised. Emily, I cannot bring myself to believe that my offer has come upon you unexpectedly; you *must* have been aware of my affection for you?" Receiving no answer, he continued in a sterner tone, "I am then to understand that, perceiving my attachment, without returning it, you have led me on merely to gratify your heartless vanity, till, in my weak trustfulness, I have placed it in your power to inflict this blow upon me—a blow, the effects of which years will fail to counteract. It is not my pride that is wounded: the little pride I ever possessed has been pretty well taken out of me by the drudgery of life ere this; but that such deep, unselfish love,

such entire boundless trust, should have been thus bitterly deceived, thus heartlessly rejected, and by one who seemed all truth, innocence, and gentleness. Oh! it is unnatural, incredible!" He sprang from his chair, and began pacing the room with rapid strides, then continued, "But I will overcome it; it is unworthy to be thus affected—to feel thus for one capable of such deception. No! cost me what it may, I will crush ——!"

Gently, my dear sir, gently: you may crush exactly what you please of your own, your outraged affections, your rejected heart, or that very nice new hat which you purchased in your way through London, though that would be the most wantonly extravagant act of the three; but you mustn't crush our Rosebud, albeit she is such a heartless little tigress. Ay! you may well stop and look at her! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Carrington! so you ought! And you a clergyman too!

Stop and look at her! Why, what was there to see in that calm, expressionless face, that cold stoical exterior?—only that the said stoicism had turned out a dead failure, broken down with its would-be-professor at the critical moment, and there she was cry-

ing her woman's tender heart out, through her woman's beautiful eyes, more like Niobe than Plato, by long odds.

When Ernest perceived this, he experienced what dear Mrs. —— would call, in her very affecting third-volume style, "a tremendous revulsion of feeling," under the influence of which he seated himself beside the weeping Rosebud, and, taking her poor, cold, little hand, said—

"Emily, dearest Emily, what is all this? Why! you are making yourself as miserable as you have made me! Come, treat me as a friend—a brother: confide in me. You must have some reason for what you are doing. Tell me"—and here, despite his best efforts, his voice faltered—"tell me—your happiness is ever my first consideration, and, even though it involve the ruin of my dearest hopes, I will strive to secure it—do you love another?"

She did not speak; in fact, she could not just at that moment, by reason of the *globus-hystericus* interfering with the action of the *larynx*—to write technically—or because of a choking sensation in the throat, if any reader prefers the colloquial style; but she had very expressive eyes, and

they said "no" just as plainly, or rather as prettily, as her lips could have done.

Ernest felt better; if she did not love anybody else, she must in time love him. Such affection as his must produce a return—he knew, he felt——but you see the line of argument, dear reader. Well, then, what was the hitch? Ernest pondered; at last, a bright idea occurred to him. The change in Emily had taken place since the previous day. Yes, *that* was it! So he half muttered, half thought, to himself: "Some absurd, romantic, generous scruple about this confounded"—I am afraid he said confounded—"fortune." He then continued aloud, rather in the tone in which he talked to the very little children in the Sunday-school:—

"Now listen to me, dear Emily. The happiness of my life, and, as I cannot but hope" (charitable hope!), "of yours also, is at stake. I once again tell you that I love you, as I have never loved before—as I shall never love again; that I love you with the one, deep, enduring passion of my life-time. And I ask you—I adjure you—for both our sakes, to tell me, as truly as the fact will appear on that solemn

day when the secrets of all hearts shall be known, do you return my affection?—Emily, dearest, do you love me?"

Well, of course she could not say "No," for that would have been false; she must say something, for, Sunday-school manner and all, Ernest had become rather awful at last, so there was nothing left for her but to say "Yes"—which she did accordingly. That, in fact, settled the question; for, naturally, Ernest decided, if she loved him, she must and should marry him; and then he elicited from her, that it *was* the fortune, upon which he observed—

"Very well: that he *had* hoped and intended to send Percy to college, and to buy Hugh a commission, and to build a church at Devils-port, and to despatch a bran-new missionary to Sambobamboo, and to erect some very uncomfortable model cottages for the poor people, and to double Mr. Slowkopf's salary; but that if Emily persisted in refusing him because of the fortune, he would that very afternoon make it over by a deed of gift to that fine young man Mr. Peter Crawley, and marry her on the £800 per annum which he received as rector."

And so, as it was quite clear that he meant what he said, and was prepared to act up to it, the poor Rosebud was obliged to give in, and consent to accept him, fortune and all.

Thus the interview ended as happily as it had begun miserably; and if Ernest didn't steal a kiss ere he took leave, it must have been because he was a clergyman, and had the fear of the bishop before his eyes;—though if the bishop had been at all a good-natured one, he would surely have winked at such an offence — certainly an *arch*-bishop would have done so!

CHAPTER XVI., AND LAST.

THE MORAL—DRAWN VERY MILD!

ONCE again it was Christmas-day. At Ashburn Priory the plum-pudding was a "great fact;" Hugh Colville said so, and he ought to have known, for he ate enough, not to say too much, of it to test its merits—at least, if there be any truth in the old proverb, that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." But there were other good things at Ashburn Priory beside plum-pudding. Love, and Joy, and Peace dwelt there, and pure Religion shed her mild light upon that happy household. The cloud which had hung over the fortunes of the Colville family, had passed away, and the silver lining alone remained to testify that although

> "In every life some rain must fall,
> Some days be dark and dreary,"

yet that rain falls only to fertilize the ground and enable it to bring forth fruit and flowers; and the

metaphor holds good in the case before us. The sorrow which had fallen upon the Colville family had been a chastening sorrow, and its effects were to be recognized in a goodly crop of virtues.

The proud and sensitive disposition of Percy, had been strengthened and fitted for intercourse with the every-day world, by the rough teaching of the commercial school, and he was about to enter on his Oxford career, a wiser and a better man than a more refined mode of education would have rendered him.

Hugh's volatile and impetuous disposition had been also favourably acted upon, by the misfortune which caused him to be placed under Doctor Donkiestir's firm and judicious rule; and he had learned one essential requisite for a soldier's profession, on which, since he had been to spend a day with Norman (now a captain in the —th Lancers) at the Flatville barracks, he had set his heart, viz., obedience.

Mrs. Colville was almost perfect when we were first introduced to her; but the loss of one she had loved so well, had taught her to place her affections still more firmly on "things above."

As for the Rosebud—bless her! all that the

cloud had done for her was to make her the most charming little wife that ever has been, or ever will be; and if Ernest Carrington had not thought so, and doated upon her accordingly, we would, even at this eleventh hour of our tale, have procured a divorce and married her to a duke. But if we had been compelled to take so decided a step, we should have been sorely puzzled how to dispose of an autocratic and imperative baby, with a loud soprano voice, a decidedly dangerous temper, and a general tipsiness of appearance, which had established itself at the Priory, and was said by everybody to be the very image of its parents — a statement which, unlike the plum-pudding of immortal memory, was not a great fact, but, to speak mildly, an enormous—'t other thing!

If any one cares to know what became of Mr. Slowkopf, we beg to state that after Emily's marriage, he grew, day by day, more and more heavy and dejected, till at last he—died of a broken heart?—by no means — married Caroline Selby, on the principle of the Persian saying: that if she was'nt the Rose (bud), she had dwelt near the Rose (bud). Moreover, they are very happy together, and live at the rectory; Ernest

having, on Mr. Slowkopf's marriage, resigned the living in his favour, although he still generally preaches once every Sunday in Ashburn Church, and once at the new chapel-of-ease at Devil's-port; for, in Ernest, riches had wrought no change, save that, by enabling him to extend his charities, his sphere of usefulness was enlarged. His darling wish is now fulfilled: he is free to devote his whole time and talents to the welfare of others; and his position, as both landlord and spiritual pastor, affords him opportunities for carrying out his schemes for the amelioration, moral and physical, of the labouring classes, with a degree of success which few philanthropists are so fortunate as to obtain.

Reader, our tale is told. Should it assist you to while away some rainy morning of life, and at the same time, lead you to remember that above the clouds which lour so darkly, the blue Heaven lies in its deep tranquillity, and the glorious sun still shines brightly, able, when it shall be God's good pleasure, to dispel the vapours that oppress you and again shed its light and warmth into your spirit—the end for which we have written will be answered.

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